"FIRM IN UNION STILL WE STAND" POPULAR SUPPORT IN BRITAIN FOR ULSTER, 1911-1914

DANIEL M. JACKSON

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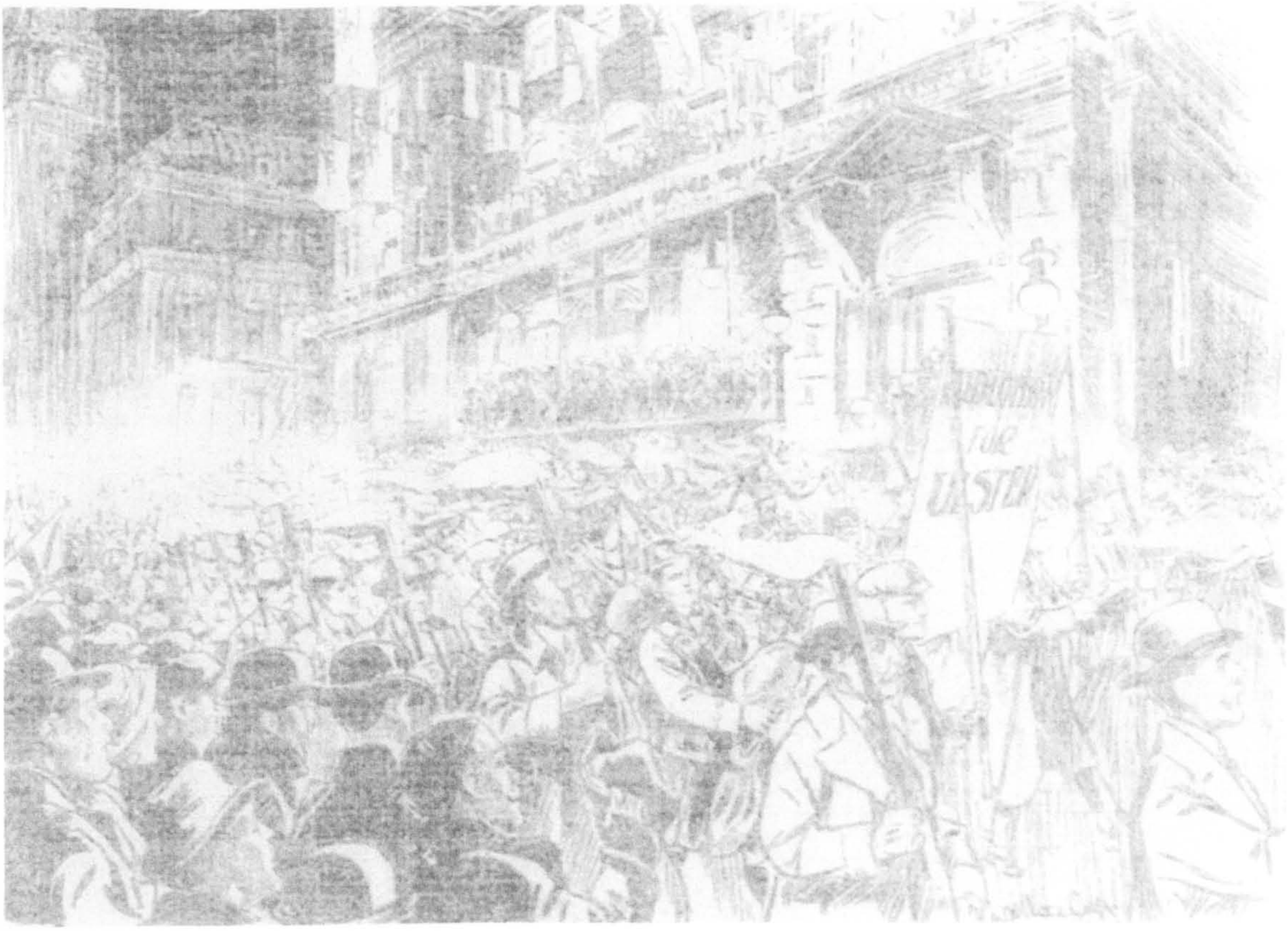
'FIRM IN UNION STILL WE STAND'

POPULAR SUPPORT IN BRITAIN FOR ULSTER, 1911–1914



DANIEL M. JACKSON BA MA

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Red the gauntlet, Ulster's hand,
Red the warning o'er the land,
Firm in union still we stand,
And Ulster shall be free.

Song of welcome from Birmingham Unionists to Sir Edward Carson
Birmingham Daily Mail, 22 November 1913

*Front cover: parade to welcome Sir Edward Carson to Liverpool, 1912 (*Liverpool Courier*, 1 October 1912)

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

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Author's declaration:
I declare that this work has not been submitted for any other award, and that it is entirely my own work.

CONVENTIONS

Since Irish political and religious terminology can be so loaded and controversial it is as well to explain my use of different labels in this thesis. I have associated the term *Ulster* with the Protestants of that province who campaigned against Home Rule, and the changing parameters of that corner of Ireland that they sought to exclude from the jurisdiction of a Dublin parliament. This is not to concede to, or identify with, their claims (or indeed to challenge them), merely to follow the – albeit contentious – convention of the time. It is also a usefully brief catch-all term for the historian.

Britain refers to the United Kingdom excluding Ireland; the *British Government* and *British Army* signify those of both islands. *Newcastle*, refers to Newcastle upon Tyne.

Likewise, *Catholics* are Roman Catholics; *Protestants* are those who belong to churches that recognise the validity of the Reformation. *Orangemen* are members of the Loyal Orange Order; *Orange* usually refers to hard-line Protestant Unionism.

Depending upon the context, *Unionist* describes either members or supporters of the Conservative and Unionist Party (and can be used interchangeably, as the Edwardians did, with *Conservative*), supporters of the maintenance of the Union between Britain and Ireland (or at least Ulster), or both.

ABBREVIATIONS

BL	British Library
BLO	Bodleian Library Oxford
BLSUU	British League for the Support of Ulster and the Union
CCC	Churchill College Cambridge
DRO	Durham County Record Office
HLRO	House of Lords Record Office
IUA	Irish Unionist Alliance
LOL	Loyal Orange Lodge
LRO	Liverpool Record Office
LWMCA	Liverpool Workingmen's Conservative Association
MP	Member of Parliament
NAS	National Archives of Scotland
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
AOH	Ancient Order of Hibernians
PRONI	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
UAI	Unionist Associations of Ireland
UDL	Union Defence League
UUC	Ulster Unionist Council
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force

Introduction

Ancient Prejudice:

Popular Politics, Social Geography, and 'No-Popery' in Edwardian Britain

Ordinary people had wildly exaggerated ideas of papal influence in Ireland, and thought of the pope as a personal and inveterate enemy, who spent all his time scheming to get his hands on the Belfast shipyards.
A. T. Q. Stewart, *The Ulster Crisis* (1967; London, 1997), p. 43

'Let them [the Conservative Party] come out of the mouldy and muddy furrow of anti-Irish prejudice'
Letter to the *Times*, 15 December 1913

I

In early 1914 a *Daily Mail* reporter asked a tram-load of Londoners for their opinions on the crisis in Ulster, and he was intrigued to discover that '"I don't think anything about it" was the answer from all.'[1] In 1915, while war raged in Europe, the Ulster playwright St. John Ervine, ruminated that before the conflagration the 'English people' had been 'totally indifferent to the Ulster volunteers'.[2] With evidence such as this it is perhaps unsurprising that many historians have assumed that Edwardian Britain met the question of Irish Home Rule with either ambivalence or incomprehension. It is commonly accepted that British indifference towards Ireland was the natural consequence of the long years of almost unbroken Unionist government after 1886 - as their comprehensive victories meant that 'the sacred cow of Home Rule', was 'slaughtered, frozen and locked away'.[3] The historically sympathetic Liberals then deliberately avoided the subject after their own resounding electoral triumph in 1906, and then did their best to play it down in the elections of 1910. After that, argued one historian, between 1911 and 1914, 'public opinion had been interested even intrigued, but scarcely roused [by the Ulster campaign].'[4] For even those who were traditionally concerned about the maintenance of the Union had by then grown weary by the seemingly perennial and intractable Irish question. 'Otherwise sympathetic English Unionists', argued Alvin Jackson, 'were, by

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[1] Paul Ferris, *The House of Northcliffe* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), p. 192
[2] St. John Ervine, *Sir Edward Carson and the Ulster Movement* (Dublin: Maunsell, 1915), p. 66-7
[3] Simon Schama, *A History of Britain: The Fate of Empire, 1776-2000* (London: BBC, 2002), p. 383. Schama must have been inspired by the Irish Nationalist MP Tim Healy's lament at the time that Home Rule was now 'in cold storage.'
[4] Jeremy Smith, *The Tories and Ireland, 1911-1914* (Dublin: Irish Academic, 2000), p. 69

1912, experiencing the Edwardian equivalent of donor fatigue: their concern for the likely fate of Irish Unionists under Home Rule was by now exhausted.'[5]

We are thus faced with a conundrum. Either these assertions of apathy are wrong - or else a quite remarkable sea-change had occurred in the political culture of Britain in those same years. The following discussion will argue that the latter suggestion is untenable, and that evidence of a continued and intense interest in the cause and case of Unionist Ireland exists. It will assert that although popular attitudes to Ireland may have softened in some places, there remained significant strongholds of resistance that the government could not ignore. After all, how could a question that had both brought down Gladstone twice, in 1886 and 1893, and provided the common ground for a new political Party to govern the country for most of the twenty years that followed, be met with apathy by the British people? How could Britain, once supremely powerful but now increasingly concerned about its place in the world, 'burdened with too vast the orb of its fate'[6], possibly even contemplate relinquishing its oldest colony, which would surely only be perceived by the world as a definite sign of Britannia's crippling malaise. How could a staunchly Protestant nation, whose unique politico-religious identity had long been defined against the supposed Roman Catholic 'other',[7] consider not only allowing, but actively sponsoring, the creation of a new parliament in the British Isles – an assembly that would surely be dominated by Catholics of questionable loyalty? Finally, how could an imperial nation, enthralled by men like Joseph Chamberlain, even imagine sacrificing those staunchly British Ulstermen, brethren in blood and religion, to Irishmen who had cheered British defeats in the Boer war?[8]

The only way to assess how rooted was this alleged apathy and abandonment is to try to assess British public opinion at the grass roots. Where this is possible, the evidence contradicts the claim that Britons were uninterested in Ulster. Roy Foster, in citing the involvement of the Astors, Bedfords, and Rothschilds, among others, has claimed that 'the Ulster question arrived in British politics as the issue upon which the landed and plutocratic interests decided to confront Lloyd George's welfare politics'.[9] This is of course true in one respect, but it underestimates what a demotic movement the campaign actually was. Even as early as 1910 the Liberals' massive parliamentary majority over the Unionists had been slashed, and this was in a large part a result of the re-emergence of the Irish question in British politics. Martin Pugh concluded neatly 'Home Rule continued to be an excellent recruiting sergeant for the Conservatives.'[10] A claim

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[5]Alvin Jackson, 'British Ireland: What if Home Rule had been enacted in 1912', Niall Ferguson, ed., *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals* (London: Picador, 1997), p. 188

[6] This was a famous quote from a speech given by Joseph Chamberlain in 1902, the implications of which are thoroughly discussed in Aaron L. Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989)

[7] A point cogently discussed in Linda Colley, 'Britishness and Otherness: An Argument', *Journal of British Studies*, 31 (1992).

[8] James Loughlin, 'Joseph Chamberlain, English nationalism, and the Ulster question', *History*, 77 (1992)

[9] R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972* (London: Penguin, 1988), p. 465

[10] Martin Pugh, *The Tories and the People, 1880-1935* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), p. 90

reiterated by another eminent Irish Historian: 'Home Rule', he plainly insists, 'was an unpopular cause in England.'[11]

II

Besides the ballot-box, British support for Ulster was also expressed in other, often more forceful ways; in ways that often actually transcended orthodox political allegiance. In early twentieth-century Britain people regularly took to the streets to witness and participate in great social and political events, and the recently discovered Mitchell and Kenyon film archive attests to how the Edwardians nurtured a 'vigorous late flowering of this English processional culture'.[12] Indeed, one historian has noted that 'in the early twentieth century a wave of 'pageantitis' was reported to be sweeping Britain'[13], and another has claimed that at the turn of the last century, the British ruling elite busied themselves with the promotion of 'spectacle, pageant and "public theatre."'[14] It is suggestive, therefore, that the campaign against Home Rule was most effectively incarnated through political pageantry, drawing some of the largest protesting crowds of that period onto the streets.

It has been estimated that in 1912 a combined total of around 300,000 people took part in an evocative series of demonstrations held over two days in Liverpool to welcome Sir Edward Carson to the city after he had signed the Ulster Covenant in Belfast.[15] Glasgow and the west of Scotland too witnessed notable displays of antagonism to Irish Home Rule. Scottish volunteer contingents were raised to defend Ulster, and Carson spoke at well attended meetings in the city in 1912 and 1913, which were both accompanied by the kind of stylised public processions that were to be the hallmark of his visits to Britain.[16] But these rallies were not just confined to the sectarian redoubts of Merseyside and Clydeside. In the years immediately before the Great War demonstrations in support of Ulster took place in places as disparate as Croydon and Inverness, Norwich and the Rhondda.

Moreover, aside from these grand gatherings, support for Carson's campaign manifested itself in other more tangible ways. In March 1913 a 'League for the Support for Ulster and the Union' was founded and soon attracted over 10,000 members as well as enlisting

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[11] Alvin Jackson, *Home Rule: An Irish History, 1800-2000* (London: Phoenix, 2004), p. 124
[12] Andrew Prescott, '"We had fine banners": street processions in the Mitchell and Kenyon films', Vanessa Toulmin, Patrick Russell, and Simon Popple, *The Lost World of Mitchell and Kenyon: Edwardian Britain on Film* (London: BFI Publishing, 2004), p 325
[13] Deborah S. Ryan, 'Staging the imperial city: The Pageant of London, 1911', Felix Driver and David Gilbert, *Imperial Cities: Landscape, Display and Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999)
[14] P. Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics: The Culture of the factory in late Victorian England* (Brighton: Harvester, 1980), p. 300
[15] D. M. Jackson, 'Friends of the Union: Anti-Home Rule demonstrations in Liverpool, 1912-1914', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 152 (2003)
[16] T. M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation, 1700-2000* (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 506

the public support of 100 peers and 120 MPs.[17] A separate 'British Covenant' - which emulated the solemn pledge of their Ulster cousins - was published, to which, by July 1914, almost two million signatures had been appended.[18] Older established organisations like the Primrose League also rallied round. In 1913 it even managed to arrange promises of accommodation for up to 8,000 (Unionist) refugee women and children should hostilities break out in Ireland, and by August 1914 they had also managed to raise over £17,000 (which is the equivalent of nearly one million pounds today) for the same purpose.[19]

Yet it is those extraordinarily well attended demonstrations and public meetings - and particularly their deliberately antiquated style - that contribute much to our understanding of the support Carson and Ulster enjoyed on the mainland. Such activity fits into Eric Hobsbawm's schema of the invention and creation of tradition between 1870 and 1914, as phenomena which celebrated and venerated the past as the 'legitimator of action and cement of social cohesion.'[20] This study argues that it is through attempting to decipher the meaning and mechanics of crowds that we can overcome one of the central questions facing the historian of these phenomena: namely, how do we reveal what ordinary people thought about the great political issues of the past?

For this is more difficult than at first we might imagine. Aside from the ballot-box, the views of the common man are seemingly inscrutable: his diaries and personal reminiscences are exceedingly rare; and the period in question being over ninety years ago means that the prospect of gaining any oral testimony through interview is highly unlikely. To track these actions we have only press reportage, and the reminiscences and observations of contemporary actors, which tell us that thousands of people took to the streets to protest against Irish Home rule before the Great War.[21] These numbers are crucial, but it could tempt the historian into a crude interpretation that saw this mobilisation as merely evidence of some popular opposition - from which we could deduce little, and could therefore be summarily dealt with or even ignored. There are two main problems here: firstly this would seriously underestimate the scale of this popular protest, and secondly it would disregard the enormous amount of press reportage of such demonstrations, which, when handled sensitively, can have the potential to become a rich and fertile source through which we can reinterpret crowds.

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[17] An interesting discussion of the League's founder is to be found in, Gregory D. Phillips, 'Lord Willoughby de Broke and the Politics of Radical Toryism, 1909-1914', *Journal of British Studies*, 20, 1 (1980)

[18] W. S. Rodner, 'Leaguers, Covenanters, Moderates: British support for Ulster', *Eire-Ireland*, 17, 3 (1982), p. 82

[19] Pugh, *Tories and the People*, p. 165

[20] Eric Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: Inventing Traditions', p. 12; idem., 'Mass Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914', Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000 edn.)

[21] D. M. Jackson and D. M. MacRaild, 'The Conserving Crowd: Mass Unionist Demonstrations in Liverpool and Tyneside, 1912-1913', D. G. Boyce and Alan O'Day, eds, *The Ulster Crises, 1885-1921* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004)

As the production of saffron requires tons of the plant to extract a few ounces of the prized spice, so too must we sift through yards of newsprint to reveal precious accounts of crowd action. The distance that separates us from ordinary Edwardians, the fact that their ephemeral lives leave little trace of their very existence, let alone their opinions, makes this laborious task inescapable, but ultimately rewarding. The scarcity of evidence behoves the historian to analyse those press reports as carefully as possible; and, where appropriate, this is often most effectively achieved by taking an interdisciplinary approach. By exploiting the techniques developed by those historians, social theorists and even anthropologists whose work has attempted to uncover the meaning of crowds we are able to emphasise the role of common men and women, rather than the political grandee.

When in 1837 James Bronterre O'Brien set about organising a great Chartist petition he cared little about the document itself, or even the amount of signatures appended to it. Instead, what excited him was the proposed procession which would carry it to Parliament. 'A petition of this sort', he wrote, 'accompanied to the House by 200,000 people and headed by all the popular leaders of good repute throughout the country, would be worth ten thousand of the ordinary kind'. Feargus O'Connor added that their weapons were now the 'petition, the meeting, and the procession.'[22] Following the Chartists therefore, we can take as evidence not just the personal papers of great men, but we can also view the crowds of people at political demonstrations as a text that can be analysed and treated as being as much of an articulation of belief as a lengthy speech or treatise.

One historian has written that the sixty years between the Gordon riots of 1780 and the Chartist effusions of the 1840 had radically changed the 'collective repertoire of gestures' available to protesting crowds. The crude brutality of the eighteenth century mob was replaced by the introduction of a sophisticated inventory of symbolic acts including simultaneous meetings, banner waving, and prompted cheers. Something almost entirely new was created in the process, for now demonstrations involved: 'gathering deliberately in a visible, symbolically important place, displaying signs of shared commitment to some claim on authorities, then dispersing.'[23] Indeed, the important work of Mark Harrison has shown us that the function of early nineteenth century crowds lay in providing people with symbolic reference points, and can be seen as 'vehicles for the expression of cohesion', and for crowd members to perceive themselves and to be perceived as 'bearers of messages.'[24] In many ways this claim is not a novel one. What is refreshing is the way in which he has led us away from the simplistic, yet persistent approach that has regularly conflated crowds with riots to challenge the view that 'crowds are inherently violent and disruptive', when in fact most of them were hardly ever riotous.[25]

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[22] Dorothy Thompson, *The Chartists: Popular Politics in the Industrial Revolution* (New York: Pantheon, 1984), pp. 58, 324

[23] Charles Tilly, *Popular Contention in Great Britain, 1758-1834* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 24

[24] Mark Harrison, *Crowds and History: Mass Phenomena in English Towns, 1790-1835* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 27

[25] Harrison, *Crowds*, p. 5.

Harrison's *Crowds and History*, concerned itself chiefly with the first four decades of the nineteenth, yet its conclusions remain eminently applicable to a study of early twentieth century Britain. After all, it is instructive to discover that one historian has concluded that by the end of the nineteenth century 'processions were taken to be an index of civility ... a model of collective behaviour in public.'[26] Seventy years after the Chartists, political processions, marches, and crowds were still a commonplace in Britain, and should be studied for the light they throw on the social, cultural and political history of the period. Therefore a new historiography of the crowd has emerged that benefits from its refusal to omit any other sort of public gathering from comparative study; and when Harrison asks us rhetorically whether 'crowds at celebratory events [should] be regarded in an entirely different light from crowds at riots',[27] we can begin usefully to make the connection between people gathered at royal jubilees, civic ceremonials, football matches, and political demonstrations.

In many ways Harrison's work was foreshadowed by the nineteenth-century sociologist Emile Durkheim, who first discussed terms such as 'conscience collective' and 'collective effervescence.' Though it is in fact Durkheim's application of these ideas to the study of religion (which has been summarised as 'the expression and projection of collective identity'[28]), which is most useful to this study. For in Durkheim's integrationist approach, the 'conscience collective' was often a product of crowd assembly:

> Where the individuals, being closely united to one another, reaffirm in common their common sentiments; hence some ceremonies do not differ from regular religious ceremonies, either in their object, the results which they produce, or the processes employed to attain those results.[29]

In other words, then, we can derive oceans of meaning from one of Edward Carson's highly ritualised urban perambulations if we appreciate that these ceremonies diverge from orthodox religious occasions only in the object being venerated: in this case the Act of Union personified in a Loyal Irishman. In this sense those meetings addressed by Carson in England and Scotland were both momentous, and expressive, for they can be seen as collective reaffirmations of a type of British identity that felt increasingly under threat.

Although the present study is informed by insights from social theory, it is a work of history, and rests upon the diverse but fragmentary sources available to us. For it is within the specific historic detail that we often find the most revealing evidence, even if this evidence may in fact jar with those otherwise helpful, yet overarching theories. This claim merely echoes the conclusions drawn by David Cannadine who has resolutely put

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[26] Simon Gunn, 'Ritual and civic culture in the English industrial city, c. 1835-1914', Richard H. Trainor and Robert J. Morris, *Urban Governance: Britain and Beyond since 1750* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), p. 233

[27] Harrison, *Crowds*, p. 23

[28] Trevor Noble, *Social Theory and Social Change* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), p. 128

[29] E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trs. Joseph Swain (London: Allen and Unwin, 1915), p.427

forward the claims of a history that is conversant with theory, but not beholden to it. Thus, he says, 'for it is at the contextual, rather than at the theoretical level, that is actually possible to reconcile and explain, resolve and understand.'[30] Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to be somewhat imaginative in the way we approach these Edwardian political demonstrations if we are to extrapolate any meaning from phenomena which have hitherto evaded the historian's analytical gaze.

Thus we must turn to Cannadine again, as he introduces us to the idea of 'circularity', suggesting that these sorts of public events 'were of significance in *creating* the context, the cultural climate, even as it also derived meaning *from* it.'[31] Following on from this point therefore, this work will argue that these public displays of solidarity with Protestant Ireland are absolutely crucial to our understanding of a strand of British popular political culture, as, in Cannadine's words, 'it may well be that these spectacles were not just the expression of this sense of community: perhaps they were the community.'[32]

It seems that public demonstrations were the only way in which a pro-Unionist sentiment could be translated into a tangible, corporeal entity; and this study will argue that such meetings provide the evidence that a type of informal unionist *Gemeinschaft* existed throughout the United Kingdom, bound, in many cases, by ties of faith and kinship. Moreover, it will attempt to correct the presumption that Ulster did not exercise public opinion: it did, and there is plenty of evidence to prove it. Of course this is not to say that there was not a great deal of indifference in Britain towards the problems of Ireland, of course there was. Many people then, as now, were simply uninterested in the great political questions of the day; yet it is to the many that were exercised by these issues that this thesis will address. For it is amongst those who showed such passionate devotion to the idea of a truly united kingdom, with its, perceived to be, ancient religious and political settlement undisturbed, that we see embodied the mores and modes of thought of a 'long nineteenth century'.

III

It has been contended that in so far as it is possible to say that periods of history have 'characters', there was a certain continuity in British society and culture that lasted from around the 1860s and 1870s well into the next century; and furthermore it has been shown that religion was still as important to the Edwardians as it had been to their Victorian forebears. Indeed, it is arguable that, in the years before the Great War, religion could still act as an '*independent* variable in politics', as something that could negate class based identities: and the prime example of which was, according to Jose

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[30] Elizabeth Hammerton and David Cannadine, 'Conflict and consensus on a ceremonial occasion: the Diamond Jubilee in Cambridge in 1897, *Historical Journal*, XXIV, (1981), p. 112-13
[31]David Cannadine, 'The Transformation of Civic Ritual in Modern Britain: The Colchester Oyster Feast', *Past & Present*, 94 (1984), p. 129
[32] Cannadine, 'Transformation of Civic Ritual', p. 129

Harris, the 'pan-class Protestant reactions to Irish Home Rule.'[33] The most likely recipient of the Protestant Protest vote was, of course, the Unionists who could still present themselves as being 'the Party of patriotism, of true Protestant Englishmen, of Church and Empire.'[34] It is therefore not the decline of a certain type of militant British patriotic and religious identity that is so striking; it is rather the resilience of conservative and Conservative politics in the face of other political distractions that is the remarkable political feature of this period.

But even then the position of Labour itself before 1914 is a subject of fierce debate. The classic interpretation has it that the birth of class politics before the Great War led to the inexorable demise of the Liberals and the rise of Labour.[35] And that their strong performance was particularly marked at the municipal level.[36] But this has been challenged by others who have argued that it was community rather than class that dictated how one voted in those years, and that differences in employment and the cultural traditions of a region were more important that class in informing political outlook.[37] Indeed, the belief that there was a unified homogenous, working class before 1914 has been increasingly undermined by recent scholarship.[38] The Labour Party's stunted growth before the Great War has been most convincingly described by Duncan Tanner. He argued that 'Labour had not developed the ideological/political strength to support the expansionist strategy. It had not created a solid 'class vote, based upon cultural unities which were common to working class voters in all areas', concluding that 'the Labour Party was not on the verge of replacing the Liberals in 1914.[39] In any case, the restricted franchise meant that less than one third of working class men actually had the vote, severely hampering Labour's potential.[40]

Yet when examining the political history of early twentieth century Britain the 'Strange Death of Liberal England' argument looms large.[41] Even those who dispute George

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[33] Jose Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870-1914* (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 8.
[34] Paul Thompson, *The Edwardians: The Remaking of British Society* (St. Albans: Palladin, 1977), p. 227
[35] This view is supported by R. McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party, 1910-1924* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), and K. Laybourn and J. Reynolds, eds, *Liberalism and the Rise of Labour, 1890-1918* (London: Croom Helm, 1984)
[36] M. G. Sheppard and J. L. Halstead, 'Labour's Municipal Election Performance in Provincial England and Wales, 1901-1913', *Society for the Study of Labour History*, 45, autumn 1982, pp. 19-25; Laybourn and Reynolds, *Liberalism*, p. 149
[37] P. F. Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); J. Benson, *The Working Class in Britain, 1850-1914* (London: Longman, 1989)
[38] For example, Alastair Reid, *Social Classes and Social Relations in Britain, 1850-1914* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992); Andrew Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty: Working-Class Culture in Salford and Manchester, 1900-1939* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992); Joanna Bourke, *Working Class Cultures in Britain, 1890-1960: Gender, Class, and Ethnicity* (London: Routledge, 1994)
[39] Duncan Tanner, *Political Change and the Labour Party, 1900-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 317, 441; this is also supported by R. Douglas, 'Labour in Decline, 1910-1914', K. D. Brown, ed., *Essays in Anti-Labour History* (London: Macmillan, 1974)
[40] H. G. C. Matthew, R. McKibbin, and J. Kay, 'The Franchise Factor in the Rise of the Labour Party', *English Historical Review* xci, June (1976), pp. 723-52, N. Blewett, 'The Franchise in the United Kingdom, 1885-1918', *Past & Present*, 32 (1965), p. 31; this view has been challenged by P. F. Clarke, 'Liberals, Labour, and the Franchise', *English Historical Review* xcii, October 1977, pp. 582-90
[41] George Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England*, (1935; London: Serif, 1997).

Dangerfield's central thesis that the Liberal Party was doomed by the rise of Labour and class-based politics have accepted that Edwardian society faced an extraordinary crisis.[42] It may be true that the campaigns for women's suffrage and workers rights had reached unprecedented levels of sophistication and militancy, but these were relatively recent developments (and in any case, although 1913 saw the most strikes before the Great War, 'the great labour unrest' had passed its peak by 1912).[43] In sharp contrast stood the campaign against Home Rule in which, for its belligerence and barely hidden religiosity, one could detect feint echoes of the wars of the seventeenth century.

Of course, mass support for the Unionist Party was not based entirely upon a crude sectarian and xenophobic instinct. One study of politics in Preston has shown that widespread working-class support for the Tories there had nothing to do with deference; rather it was simply the consequence of 'workers pursuing their interests in a particular economistic way'.[44] And many other occupation groups across the country who faced increasing foreign competition, such as 'the Coventry ribboners, the Nottingham lace-makers, the Boston Fishermen and the metalworkers of the Midlands and of Sheffield, favoured protection of some sort and voted [for the Unionists].'[45]

This thesis contends that although the growing militancy and class awareness of British society before the Great War should not be ignored, it has been overplayed. For the progressive alliance was actually in a precarious state by 1914; and it is noticeable that the Unionists took advantage of this as they won a number of three cornered fights in those years. Furthermore, the reform of the Unionist Party apparatus by Bonar Law in 1912, and the installation of the competent Arthur Steel Maitland as party chairman, made the prospect of the opposition winning the next general election 'quite likely'.[46] This was underscored by the resilience of working-class Conservatism – a phenomenon that has been too often overlooked, or dismissed as a form of political deviance. After all, as Joan Smith has described, 'the defeat of Chartism within Britain allowed nationalist and Conservative strands to re-emerge as dominant within the commonsense tradition of British working men.'[47]

Jon Lawrence has persuasively argued that we should, therefore, eschew this reductionist model which presumes that political belief arises 'automatically from the objective economic and social interests of groups of electors.'[48] And much work has been done to

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[42] David Powell, *The Edwardian Crisis: Britain, 1901-1914* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996).
[43] H. A. Clegg, *A History of British Trade Unions Since 1889*: Vol. II: *1911-1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), ch. 2; see also Robert Holton, *British Syndicalism, 1900-1914: Myths and Realities* (London: Pluto, 1974)
[44] Michael Savage, *The Dynamics of Working Class Politics, 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 140-1
[45] A. J. Lee, 'Conservatism, Traditionalism and the British Working Class, 1880-1918', D. E. Martin and D. Rubinstein, eds., *Ideology and the Labour Movement* (London: Croom Helm, 1979) p.88.
[46] Searle, *A New England*, p. 454
[47] Joan Smith, 'Class, skill, and sectarianism in Glasgow and Liverpool', R. J. Morris, ed., *Class, power and social structure in British nineteenth century towns* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1986), p. 166
[48] Jon Lawrence, 'Class and Gender in the Making of Urban Toryism, 1880-1914', *English Historical Review* (1993), p. 630.

demonstrate that politics remained resolutely independent from 'the social'[49] In this sense then, Unionist success should not be explained only in terms of Liberal or Labour failure, for this would ascribe a passivity to the electorate that is both patronising and misleading.[50] Rather, we should accept that political identities are difficult to pin down – and not always based upon a sober analysis of what the political parties had to offer. Indeed, by the turn of the century leading progressives like J. A. Hobson had had their belief in the merits of democracy shaken by the resilience of jingoism, working class conservatism and, as well as the supposed 'irrationalism' of the mass mind.[51]

Put simply no group of voters were yet out of bounds to the two big parties (and, indeed, even after the attainment of universal suffrage, one third of the working classes have consistently voted Tory, providing that Party with half of its support).[52] We should recognise instead, as Lawrence has argued elsewhere, the increasingly influential view that stresses the 'creative role of political parties and on the power of language to shape political identities'[53] Lawrence also maintains that any student of popular politics should be mindful of the importance of 'reception', that is, 'the question of how ordinary voters actually responded to the Party discourses analysed by the historian.'[54]

Previous, high-political, studies of the Unionist Party's campaign against Home Rule have, quite naturally given their scope, never really addressed its popular dimension. Although this work seeks to unearth the opinions of the 'common man', it is also concerned with the methods employed by Unionist politicians to arouse his interest. To be sure, Ireland could stimulate ancient British prejudice, but it still required someone to do the stimulating – to harangue the government, to articulate an appeal, and to mobilise supporters into the voting booth or out onto the street. After all, it was a cherished belief among Ulster Unionists that 'that their co-religionists [in Britain] would eventually come

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[49] For example, Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History, 1832-1982* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Jonathan Zeitlin, 'From Labour History to the History of Industrial Relations', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 40 (1987), pp. 159-84; Ross McKibbin, *Ideologies of Class: Social Relations in Britain, 1880-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Michael Savage and Andrew Miles, *The Remaking of the British Working Class, 1940-1940* (London: Routledge, 1994)

[50] This is a point picked up in Marc Brodie's study of working class Conservatism in London, *The Politics of the Poor: The East End of London, 1885-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2004)

[51] Jon Lawrence, 'The Dynamics of Urban Politics, 1867-1914', Jon Lawrence and Miles Taylor, eds, *Party, State and Society: Electoral Behaviour in Britain since 1820* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1997), p. 95; J. A. Hobson, *The Psychology of Jingoism* (London: Grant Richards, 1901); see also Asa Briggs, 'The Language of "Mass" and "Masses" in Nineteenth Century England', David Martin and David Rubinstein, eds, *Ideology and the Labour Movement: Essays Presented to John Saville* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), pp. 62-83; Jon Lawrence, 'Popular Radicalism and the Socialist Revival in Britain', *Journal of British Studies*, 31 (1992), pp. 163-86

[52] E. A. Nordlinger, *The Working Class Tories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 13. For much of the inter-war period, it has been argued, the Tories were the working class Party 'par excellence', see C. Cook, *The Age of Alignment* (London: Macmillan, 1975), p. 84-5

[53] Lawrence, 'Dynamics of Urban Politics', p. 91

[54] Lawrence, 'Dynamics of Urban Politics', p. 91

round to their way of thinking [and] that it only required increased propaganda efforts',[55] and, thanks to some professional organisation, this was by and large what happened.

IV

Home Rule was an issue that had an obvious religious dimension. One key study of this period stressed the importance of creed not just in a spiritual sense, but in a social sense: 'for this was a religious age *faute de mieux*. Its stock of ideas was cast in religious terms, its platitudes were religious platitudes, its clichés religious clichés ... and its divisions were religious.'[56] After all, only as recently as the 1880s was it discovered that Britain had 'more clerics of one sort or another than any country except Italy and Spain.'[57] Therefore in a manifestly successful nation, intensely aware of its past, the view that divine providence had been pleased to shower Britain with gifts because of its implacable hostility to what was seen as papal tyranny was widely held, and reinforced from the pulpit.[58] Indeed, one diarist commented in the 1870s that the prejudices of the British bourgeoisie were as much of an obstacle to peace in Ireland as anything that emanated from the emerald isle:

> ... the Irish question has always been a religious question. And so long as we continue to govern Ireland as a Protestant country we shall govern it ineffectually. The stupidity of the British middle-class is not likely, I fear, to be overcome on this point ... because [the Irish] are Catholics they have been treated like dogs and are borne down by the vulgar bigotry of English evangelicalism.[59]

The belief that the unique constitutional arrangements of Great Britain - that 'Protestant Israel' - were responsible for the freedom and prosperity that Britons enjoyed was an ancient one, a view particularly cherished among Conservatives: 'The core of the Protestant Tory idea of the constitution was that it had attained its peculiar excellence only after a long, painful struggle with Popery.'[60] This had found vehement expression in the bitter debates surrounding Catholic emancipation in the 1820s.[61] And, it was the reaction of Tory ultras in this period to the encroachment of dissent of any hue, be it

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[55] Graham Walker, *Intimate Strangers: Political and Cultural Interaction between Scotland and Ulster in Modern Times* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1995), p. 36

[56] Clarke, *Lancashire*, p. 16.

[57] Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit*, p. 151.

[58] A point discussed further in Margot Finn, 'An Elect Nation? Nation, State, and Class in Modern British History', *Journal of British Studies*, 28 (1989). One prelate who indulged in this was Bishop Knox of Manchester, see Neal Blewett, *The Peers, the parties, and the people; the general elections of 1910* (London: Macmillan, 1972), p. 341

[59] Maurice V. Brett, ed., *The Journals of Reginald, Viscount Esher: Volume 1, 1870-1903* (London: Nicholson and Watson, 1934), p. 76

[60] G. F. A. Best, 'The Protestant Constitution and its Supporters, 1800-1829', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (1957), p. 109.

[61] G. I. T. Machin, *The Catholic Question: English Politics, 1820-30* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964)

Catholic, Nonconformist, or even Utilitarian, that gave the later Conservative Party such a unique loyalty to the Confessional state that had defined Britain's own *ancien regime*.[62] For the supposed nationalism of certain sections of Edwardian society was not of that nineteenth century vintage which produced the ethnic unificatory movements of Italy and Germany. Instead it has been posited that in fact these instincts had been present in the British Isles from the time of Bede, and that 'powerful collective self images did not have to wait for nineteenth century ideas of collective unity.'[63] The religious history of England, even when Catholic, had always seen the nation as being distinctive, 'England became providential', and, perhaps crucially, it should be remembered that 'Anglican Protestantism did not become pan-European.'[64]

In the nineteenth century, an instinctive attachment to Protestantism and a zealous dislike of 'Popery' had been militant and widespread.[65] And this was a belief still commonplace in Edwardian Britain. The work of a number of historians has stressed that even if formal religious observance was declining in this period, a strong attachment to Protestant Christianity remained widespread.[66] These were beliefs shaped, if not in church, then certainly at day and Sunday schools where 'religion, politics, and patriotism often seemed inseparable.'[67] This Protestant instinct was evinced by a number of episodes including the rancour that surrounded the supposedly 'Romish' tendencies which were creeping into Anglican Liturgy;[68] the controversy that followed the exemption of Convent Laundries from municipal inspection; or the reaction to Balfour's attempt to establish a Catholic University in Ireland which was scotched by a surge of Protestant resentment by Liberal Unionists and English Tories.[69] But perhaps the most notable instance of this was the ugly sectarianism that accompanied the 1910 elections; prompting an article entitled 'Anti-Catholic Bigots and Home Rule' to appear in the *Catholic Times*.[70]

Thus, religious creed was still a powerful force in British society, even in the twentieth century: and this should provide us with an inclination of what was to assist Ulster's appeal between 1912 and 1914. After all, for the Irish Unionists at least, their definition of British nation and heritage was one in which 'Protestantism was indeed considered

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[62] The concept of a British *ancien regime* was first discussed, persuasively, in J. C. D. Clark, *English Society, 1660-1832. Religion, ideology, and politics during the* ancien regime (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 12-13, 19-26, and *passim.*

[63] J. C. D. Clark, 'Protestantism, nationalism and national identity, 1660-1832', *Historical Journal*, 43, 1 (2000), p. 251

[64] Clark, 'Protestantism', pp. 267, 271.

[65] E. R. Norman, *Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968)

[66] Hugh McLeod, 'New Perspectives on Victorian Working Class Religion: The Oral Evidence', *Oral History Journal*, 14 (1986), pp. 31-49; A. Allen MacLaren, *Religion and Social Class: The Disruption years in Aberdeen* (London, 1974), p. 126; Jeffrey Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society: Lambeth, 1870-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 90-105

[67] McLeod, H, 'Protestantism and British national identity, 1815-1945', Van der Veer, P., ed., *Religion and Nationalism in Europe and Asia* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 51

[68] This is discussed thoroughly in G. I. T. Machin, 'The last Victorian Anti-Ritualist campaign, 1895-1906', *Victorian Studies*, 25, 3 (1982).

[69] Alvin Jackson, *The Ulster Party: Irish Unionists in the House of Commons, 1884-1911* (London: Oxford Historical Monographs, 1988), pp. 178-9

[70] *Catholic Times*, 25 November 1910

central.'[71] Perhaps, then, a new appreciation of the role of religion - in a non-spiritual sense - in British political and social history is required: an approach which allocates to the British people a sectarian impulse - for outbursts of 'plebeian patriotism and of a true-born Englishmen's Protestantism', although usually dormant, could be stimulated with surprising regularity.[72] And it is important to recognise that for all the bewildering divisions within British Protestantism those in the 1850s who were opposed to 'Papal Aggression', for instance, 'did not belong to one denomination in particular, but most often coalesced under the banner of evangelicalism'.[73]

This sectarian impulse was most often stimulated by the Irish. It was commented on by at least one historian that the paradox of mid-Victorian Britain was that the growth of Protestant evangelicalism coincided with massive Irish Catholic immigration who were shepherded by a vigorous and confident papacy.[74] Their arrival in Britain in huge numbers in the nineteenth century often served to antagonise the indigenous British who began to pejoratively stereotype the Irish as feckless, emotional, improvident, incomprehensible, violent, and superstitiously attached to popery, all of which was reinforced by the Tory as well as the gutter press.[75] 'A culture of anti-Irishness' became commonplace, based upon 'an odd compound of religious, social and political elements, of the rational and the irrational'.[76] It has also been shown that, like the Americans and Germans in this period, the Irish were the archetypal 'other' which helped the British to 'make sense of themselves', and to reinforce ethnic identity.[77]

It is useful, therefore, to make the hitherto ignored connection between an important sequence of events, all of which all kindled anti-Catholicism, anti-Irishness, or usually both. A series that could begin relatively late with Catholic emancipation in 1829, before proceeding to the furores that surrounded the Maynooth grant in 1845 and the so called

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[71] Graham Walker, *Intimate Strangers*, p. 25; see also T. Hennessy, 'Ulster Unionist territorial and national identities 1886-1893: province, island, kingdom, and empire', *Irish Political Studies* Vol. 8 (1993), pp. 21-36

[72] S. H. Palmer, *Police and Protest in England and Ireland, 1780-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 50

[73] Frank Wallis, 'Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Victorian Britain: Theory and Discipline', *Journal of Religion and Society*, 7 (2005), p. 4; Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1970), pp. 17, 21, 39-41

[74] Walter L. Arnstein, *Protestant versus Catholic in Mid-Victorian England: Mr. Newdegate and the Nuns* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1982), p. 3

[75] L. P. Curtis, *Anglo-Saxons and Celts: A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England* (Bridgeport, CT: New York University Press, 1968), pp. 27, 24; idem., *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (Newton Abbot: Davis and Charles, 1971); D. G. Paz, 'Anti-Catholicism, Anti-Irish Stereotyping, and Anti-Celtic Racism in Mid-Victorian Working Class Periodicals', *Albion*, winter (1986), p.611, 616

[76] D. M. MacRaild, *Irish Migrants in Modern Britain, 1750-1922* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), p. 155; M. A. G. Ó Tuathaigh, 'The Irish in nineteenth century Britain: problems of integration', R. Swift and S. Gilley, eds, *The Irish in the Victorian City* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), p. 20

[77] W. J. Lowe, *The Irish in Mid-Victorian Lancashire: The Shaping of a Working Class Community* (New York: Bern, 1990), p. 147; D. T. Knobel, *Paddy and the Republic: Ethnicity and Nationality in Antebellum America* (Middletown, CT: 1986), p. 26, 4; Marjule Anne Drury, 'Anti-Catholicism in Germany, Britain, and the United States: A Review and Critique of Recent Scholarship." *Church History*, 70 (2001), 117

'Papal Aggression' of 1851;[78] the 'Garibaldi riots' of 1862 and 1866;[79] then the 'Fenian Scare' of 1867 to 1868 when there were reported to be 80,000 active Fenians in Britain and their bloody raids and bombings at Chester, Manchester, and Clerkenwell shocked the nation.[80] Then the disestablishment of the Church in Ireland in 1869, when the country, and Lancashire in particular, 'lost its head' (indeed an orator in Salford denounced Gladstone by declaiming that 'Judas Iscariot was more of a gentleman than the present premier of England'[81]), and which led directly to the founding of the Glasgow Working Men's Conservative Association in 1869 (the first formal working class political organisation in the city).[82] This was followed by the hullabaloo which accompanied the Papal Infallibility Decree of 1875; the Home Rule Bills of 1886 and 1893; the 'Rome on the rates' controversy following the Education Bill of 1902; the ritualism dispute of the early 1900s which saw Anglican services disrupted by militant groups like the 'Manchester Protestant Thousand' and the Wycliffe Preachers;[83] the response to the Vatican's *Ne Temere* decrees on the invalidity of mixed marriages, and the 'upsurge of popular Protestantism' that was initiated by the staging of the Catholic Eucharistic Conference of 1908;[84] the uproar that met the removal of denunciations of Catholic superstition in the King's Coronation Oath in 1910; the 'equation of Home Rule with Rome Rule [which] bred anti-Catholic prejudice' during the second of the 1910 elections.[85] Then, finally, the Home Rule 'crisis' between 1911 and 1914. (It should also be mentioned that all these episodes were interspersed, and indeed woven together, with numerous smaller scale, localised disturbances and riots, which have recently attracted much scholarly attention.)[86]

In studying the excited political developments in Edwardian Britain it is tempting to privilege change over continuity. It is also appealing to perceive in the tumult the seeds

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[78] This led to serious disturbances in and around Manchester, see P. Millward, 'The Stockport Riots of 1852: A Study of Anti-Catholic and Anti-Irish Sentiment', R. Swift & S. Gilley, eds, *The Irish in the Victorian City* (London: Croom Helm, 1985); see Robert J. Klaus, *The Pope, The Protestants and the Irish: Papal Aggression and Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Nineteenth Century England* (New York: Garland, 1987), p. 302-3

[79] Sheridan Gilley, 'The Garibaldi Riots of 1862', *Historical Journal*, 16 (1973); Frank Neal, 'The Birkenhead Garibaldi Riots of 1862', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 131 (1982); D. M. Jackson, "Garibaldi or the Pope!" Newcastle's Irish Riot of 1866', *North East History* (2002),

[80] P. Quinlivan and P. Rose, *The Fenians in England, 1865-1872: a Sense of Insecurity* (London: John Calder, 1982), pp. 16-32, 50-3. There was also a resurgence of Fenianism in the 1880s, see K. R. M. Short, *The Dynamite Wars: Irish American Bombers in Victorian Britain* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1979)

[81] R. L. Greenall, 'Popular Conservatism in Salford, 1868-1886', *Northern History*, 9 (1974)

[82] John F. McCaffrey, Political Issues and Developments', W. Hamish Fraser and Irene Maver, eds, *Glasgow, Volume II: 1830-1912* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 201

[83] Roy Hattersley, *The Edwardians* (London: Little Brown, 2004), pp. 380-81

[84] James Loughlin, *Ulster Unionism and British National Identity Since 1885* (London: Cassell, 1995), p. 57; see also C. A. Devlin, 'The Eucharistic procession of 1908: the dilemma of the Liberal government', *Church History*, 63 (September, 1994), pp. 407-25

[85] Blewett, *Peers*, p. 350

[86] For an overview of this see Alan O'Day, 'Varieties of anti-Irish behaviour, 1846-1922', P. Panayi, ed., *Racial Violence in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1996), for an example of a more localised study see, Roger Swift, '"Another Stafford Street row": Law, Order and the Irish Presence in Mid-Victorian Wolverhampton', *Immigrants and Minorities*, 3 (1984)

of the subsequent entrenchment of class-based politics instead of the tenacity of traditional identities and political beliefs. Yet to do this would not only disregard the significant support that the Irish Loyalists enjoyed outside of Ireland, it also gives a misleading picture of the nature of Edwardian Britain. This was a time when the patriotic cult of Empire was perhaps at its most influential in British culture.[87] This, in turn, informed public opinion over many issues, particularly whenever it was proposed that Ireland should leave the Union. For, as one author has perceptively argued, 'Patriotism had its critics but, in the Edwardian period, it was the critics, not the patriots who felt defeated by the spirit of the age.'[88] Therefore the campaign against Home Rule is a prism through which we can analyse the political culture of that period, throwing new light on the longevity of an intensely patriotic British imperial identity that despite its survival in the face of socialism, syndicalism, and suffragettes has yet to be rigorously studied.

The narrow sectarianism of Northern Ireland before 1914 is not what is important here. The significance of Ireland to this study lies in its relationship to politics in Britain, lest we forget 'the fate of Ulster ... was always secondary to what was regarded as the interests of England and the British Empire.'[89] In the late nineteenth century, this conviction was one that had been lucidly propounded by distinguished constitutional historians, such as A. V. Dicey and his peers.[90] Their opinion was that 'to break up the United Kingdom would be to unpick the seams of British history and undermine the basis of British power.'[91] To what extent the works of such scholars were disseminated to the general public is open to question, but what is clear is that prejudice towards Ireland and Irishmen was commonplace. Therefore it was the larger, symbolic significance of Ulster's campaign that was important, and no one has described this more cogently than Jeremy Smith. 'A negative Tory line on Ulster', Smith argues, 'could still invoke a myriad of traditional sentiments and popular images', for it is clear that many ordinary Britons saw represented in the defence of the Union

> the security of the Empire, the democratic rights of minorities, opposition to political deceit, a sense of 'English' fair play , constitutional form and precedence, anti-popery and the defence of religious toleration, employment and economic prosperity, the rights of British citizenship, the protection of property, National defence and resistance to lawlessness.[92]

This study will attempt to describe that defence, and in so doing it will hope to provide new insights into a decisive period of British history. For this is a period that has been

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[87] This is a theme comprehensively discussed in: John M. MacKenzie, ed., *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986).
[88] J. H. Grainger, *Patriotisms: Britain, 1900-1939* (London: Routledge, 1986), p. vii.
[89] D. G. Boyce, 'British Conservative opinion, the Ulster question, and the partition of Ireland 1912-21', *Irish Historical Studies*, 17, 65 (1970), p. 89
[90] These works include A. V. Dicey, *England's Case against Home Rule* (London: John Murray, 1986); The Duke of Argyll, *The New British Constitution and its Master Builders* (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1888); and Sir T. Fraser, *The Military Danger of Home Rule for Ireland* (London: Murray, 1912).
[91] D. G. Boyce, 'The Marginal Britons: The Irish', Robert Colls and Phillip Dodd, eds, *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1986), p.234
[92] Jeremy Smith, *The Tories and Ireland*, p. 47

crowded with studies of high politics: works that dwell heavily on minutely detailed blow by blow accounts of the actions of the main protagonists. These admittedly contribute a great deal to our understanding, but in this instance the 'great man' approach with its 'limited horizons and self-contained logic' is, as others have argued, inadequate on its own.[93] Politicians did not operate in a vacuum. In this respect Edward Carson's vitriolic maiden speech in the House of Lords in 1921 is worth noting: 'I was only a puppet', he exclaimed, 'and so was Ulster, and so was Ireland in the political game that was to get the Conservative Party into power.'[94]

This argument may well have had a grain of truth, but if the Conservatives really had been disingenuous over their support for Protestant Ulster, then its corollary would be that their electoral successes were dependent upon a public who were still receptive to unionist agitation over Ireland. Even if Irish issues had become passé after the Great War, Ulster's cause had still mustered hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of supporters before 1914. Consequently, it is these supporters, those thousands who waited at six in the morning for Carson's ship to arrive in Liverpool, those who escorted his motorcade through industrial Tyneside, and those that signed the British Covenant in numerous British towns and cities who form the body of this study.

V

The historiography of British 'high politics' in our period has recently been enhanced and deepened by two studies: Jeremy Smith's work on the Unionist Party's policy towards Ireland in the later Edwardian years, and his case study of Bonar Law's leadership in the same period, in which he sets out to explain the thinking behind the Tories' risky hard line approach to Ireland before 1914.[95] In doing so he convincingly rehabilitates the leadership of Andrew Bonar Law by presenting him as a skilful political operator who managed to convey uncompromising support for Ulster, while at the same time preventing his opponents from branding him as an obstacle to negotiation. Smith encapsulated all this with a balletic metaphor: 'it required footwork of rare quality; to be seen dancing to the tune of compromise whilst never actually waltzing with Asquith.'[96]

The remarkable depth and thoroughness of Smith's works have been invaluable in the preparation of this thesis, because they have paved the way for further study; indeed Smith positively invites other historians to look again at this period, when he modestly concedes that his work does not: 'claim to be the last word; it merely presents one

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[93] Jon Lawrence, *Speaking for the People: Party, Language and Popular Politics in England, 1867-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 62

[94] Andrew Gailey, 'King Carson: an essay on the invention of leadership', *Irish Historical Studies*, 30 (1996), p. 83.

[95] Jeremy Smith, 'Bluff, bluster, and brinkmanship: Andrew Bonar Law and the Third Home Rule Bill', *Historical Journal*, 36, 1 (1993)

[96] Smith, 'Bluff, bluster', p. 275

representation of events without denying that those same events will and should dance to other tunes.'[97] This thesis will endeavour to accept that invitation.

As Smith's approach has been to examine the Home Rule crisis from a high political perspective it is to be expected that my study has identified points of divergence from his thesis. Therefore, this work will argue that Smith has been perhaps too hasty to play down the popular reaction that the Irish question could still provoke. He has argued, for instance, that 'British public opinion remained unmoved by Irish issues', and that the disinterest in Ireland of young Tory MPs 'echoed the acute lack of public concern with the issue.'[98] But it is surely an epistemological impossibility to prove that something does *not* exist - in this case popular opposition to Home Rule in Britain - particularly when there is evidence to the contrary. It is therefore time to look again at how the Ulster Crisis was perceived by the British public, as there is an alternative reading of these events.

For example, in a letter written from Arthur Balfour's private secretary, J. S. Sandars, to Lady Londonderry, cited by Smith, in which Sandars bemoans the fact that 'the summer and autumn campaigns had not rallied the English constituencies'[99], it would have been perhaps more useful to show that he went on say that 'the reason, I understand, is that they don't believe it will ever come to pass [Irish Home Rule]. It has twice failed before, and they think it will again for custom.'[100] A diagnosis echoed by the *Glasgow Herald*, who claimed in June 1913 that apathy *had* prevailed because the electorate were convinced that the matter was 'not urgent, nothing will happen.'[101] Which begs the question would they change their mind once they realised the urgency of the situation? A hypothesis for which this work will strongly argue. So in contradistinction to Smith's claim that Home Rule 'did not arouse the same popular passion [in Britain] as it had in 1886 or 1893'[102], this work will actually explore the passionate reaction of ordinary Britons to the Irish question in the later Edwardian period.

This hypothesis is not a controversial one: for it would surely be a non-sequitur to argue that on the one hand, the Unionists' campaign against Home Rule 'had only the faintest impact on British public opinion',[103] then, on the other, to say that by 1914 'the Tories had probably done enough by that stage to remove the Liberals from office'[104] - without the corollary that the Irish question could still arouse an excited reaction. Moreover, we must also assume that considering how Bonar Law constructed a very narrow electoral platform from the Ulster question, Unionist successes in this period were predicated to an unusually large degree on support for the Union, or at least Ulster. For as one historian of the Party has contended

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[97] Smith, *Tories and Ireland*, p. 10
[98] Smith, *Tories and Ireland*, p. 34, p. 8
[99] Smith, *Tories and Ireland*, p. 70
[100] D/Lo/C671 (83) Letter from J. S. Sandars to Lady Londonderry, 3 November 1912.
[101] *Glasgow Herald*, 13 June 1913
[102] Smith, *Tories and Ireland*, p. 7. This is a moot point, for Smith later suggests that Gladstone's downfall owed less to enthusiasm for the Unionists than to Liberal abstention, p. 14
[103] Smith, *Tories and Ireland*, p. 64
[104] Smith, *Tories and Ireland*, p. 199

> There remained ... abundant evidence that for many Unionists there lay just beneath the surface a volcano of intense feeling on the question which would erupt if ever circumstances beyond their control once again made Home Rule an issue of practical politics.[105]

Although this work is not intended as a study of high politics, it would be remiss not to deploy some of its findings or methodology. Instead, those interested in 'history from below' must learn to study the same material in a different way. As we are hamstrung by the general voicelessness of the ordinary people of ninety years ago, we are forced to become both imaginative in our application of social science, and open-minded in our investigation of disparate sources. For the private correspondence and political memoirs of the great and good can still be very useful, but it is often the case that they must be read against the grain - or at least read differently from other historians - as it is often within the incidental that the most revealing facts about popular movements can be discovered. But before we attempt to utilize any of these sources as evidence of public apathy, we should make ourselves more familiar with the sequence of events that comprised the Edwardian Home Rule Crisis.

If we are to usefully deploy those contemporary documents which discuss public attitudes towards Irish Home Rule then we must be very careful not to place them out of context. For example, in a letter from 1907, the Tory peer, Lord Rutland, concluded mournfully to a colleague that 'Home Rule is not the slightest use as a war cry in England'[106] – but this was a full five years and two elections before the signing of the Ulster Covenant, a watershed in the 'Ulster crisis'. Likewise the warning given to Arthur Balfour by his private secretary Jack Sandars that 'we shall hug a delusion if we imagine that Home Rule will alarm the average voter of 1911 as it did in 1886 & 1895', was given in late 1910.[107]

There also exists a raft of Unionist jeremiads about public apathy towards the Ulster question written in the summer of 1912. Yet it was not till late 1912 and the summer of 1913 that the really impressive demonstrations and expressions of support began. Similarly, the Unionist MP Sir Robert Sanders may have confided to his diary that 'the country is lethargic against Home Rule,'[108] but that was written in early June 1912. Likewise, when Sir Edward Carson told Lady Londonderry that after leaving Ireland it was 'a strange contrast to come back to the air of apathy and unreality in England', this letter was also written before the Covenant was inaugurated, in this case August 1912.[109]

In a similar vein, there are other premature diagnoses of British public opinion that are regularly cited. For example, the aforementioned J. S. Sandars may have lamented that

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[105] David Dutton, *'His Majesty's Loyal Opposition': the Unionist Party in Opposition, 1905-1915* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992), p. 208
[106] Blewett, *Peers*, p. 125
[107] Blewett, *Peers*, p. 399
[108] John Ramsden, ed., *Real old Tory Politics: The political Diaries of Sir Robert Sanders, Lord Bayford, 1910-1935* (London: The Historian's Press, 1984), p. 47
[109] H. Montgomery Hyde, *Carson* (London, 1953), p. 316.

'there is no sign of any considerable feeling against the Bill in the country', but this was written in May 1912, as was the gloomy forecast that appeared in the pro-Unionist *Times,* which stated that the country was looking on in mere bewilderment - if not mere boredom.'[110] Graham Walker's claim that 'in the period 1910-14 the Unionist press in Ulster periodically betrayed very clearly their dismay regarding the measure of support for Home Rule among both Scottish Presbyterians and English nonconformists', yet the example given is taken from January 1912.[111] James Loughlin cites the Unionist Chief Whip, David Lindsay, and his observation of 1910 that 'England is bored about Home Rule [and] in view of recent less hostile than ever', but again this analysis, correct as it may have been for *1910*, was made far too early for it to be seen as the definitive verdict on British public opinion before the Great War. Furthermore, he goes on to assert that '[b]y 1912 it was clear that the public had, by and large lost interest in the Ulster question',[112] Yet 1913 and 1914 witnessed the largest anti-Home Rule demonstrations ever recorded.

Although the aforementioned story about that the 'man in the tramcar' not caring less about Ulster was reported in 1914, the reporter had been on the tram from Blackfriars to Streatham in London.[113] It would have been unlikely that the same would have happened on a tram from Blackfriars in Glasgow or Blackfriars in Newcastle. All such pessimistic verdicts dry up remarkably after 1912, evidence perhaps that the British public was not so apathetic about Ireland after all. Indeed, by June 1914 the *Times* at least had changed its mind. 'Ulster', it declared, 'is once more not only the subject, but the scene of all political interest.'[114]

An important insight is provided in a private letter written by the senior Unionist Walter Long to the Liverpool Party boss Archibald Salvidge in late 1910 in which Long analyses the recent general election. An extract from this letter has been cited in other works in which Long laments that: 'unfortunately in many parts of the country the view was accepted by our people that Home Rule had fallen into abeyance and that there existed no longer any need to expatiate upon its dangers.'[115] However, he then proceeds to make a vital contribution to our understanding of the potency of the Home Rule question:

> My experience in the recent Elections was identical to your own: I found that audiences, both urban and rural were always ready to listen to a speech on the subject [Home Rule], that they evidenced the keenest interest in it and received with enthusiasm outspoken declarations that the prominent partner is as strongly opposed to the measure now as she has ever been. I believe the feeling on the subject is stronger now than it ever was ...[116]

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[110] Hyde, Carson, p. 66
[111] Graham Walker, *Intimate Strangers*, p. 35
[112] James Loughlin, *Ulster Unionism*, p. 54
[113] This is cited as conclusive evidence of public apathy in Donald Read, *England, 1868-1914* (London: Longman, 1979), p. 508.
[114] *Times*, 3 June 1914
[115] Blewett, *Peers*, p. 125.
[116] Letter from Walter H. Long to Alderman Archibald Salvidge, 29 December 1910 (Salvidge Papers: private uncatalogued collection).

Moreover, R. Dawson Bates, secretary of the Unionist Associations of Ireland, confidently attributed the improved Unionist performance in Britain in the December general election to

> the distribution of leaflets dealing with the attitude of the Church of Rome towards the Protestant religion in Ireland, and to the influential advocacy of our Cause by the Presbyterian and Methodist ministers who represented us.[117]

This would strongly suggest that British public opinion was at least *latently* sympathetic towards the symbolic cause of Union (and all it represented), but that it did require careful stimulation if it was to carry any political weight. 'Until the national attention and conscience is so struck, or by some fact equally spectacular and convincing', wrote the Unionist Party Chairman Arthur Steel-Maitland, 'Home Rule is of little use as an electioneering Asset.'[118]Yet, in the words of one contemporary observer, this had not prevented 'Orange intolerance and Orange prejudices' from '[winning] the day in the counsels of the Unionist Party.[119] Thus we should now discount F. E. Smith's well known observation - which has been quoted with monotonous regularity - that Home Rule was 'a dead quarrel for which neither the Party nor the country gives a damn',[120] as this was written in October 1910, at least two years before the formal reading of the Home Rule Bill, the inauguration of the Ulster Volunteer Force, the Larne gun-running, and the Curragh Mutiny, and consequently before all those huge demonstrations in Liverpool, Glasgow, Newcastle, Leeds, Hyde Park, *et al,* took place. In any case if we accept the honourable member for Liverpool Walton's diagnosis of public opinion it would be difficult then to explain the notoriously calculating Smith's later enthusiasm for the Ulster cause - to the extent of donning riding gear and acting as General Richardson's 'Galloper' at Ulster Volunteer Force reviews in Belfast – without conceding that something of a shift in public opinion had occurred during the first four years of the 1910s.

A shaky grasp of chronology has been a common flaw in the historiography of the period. For in tackling the supposed decline in the potency of Home Rule as a negative force to be harnessed by the Unionists, most commentators have thought it sufficient, as we have just seen, to draw our attention only to *pessimistic* comments made by some senior Tories, or the precipitate prognostications made by despairing editors of Unionist organs prior to the years of most intense struggle. Yet from late 1912, the Irish issue did resume centre stage, and the Tories could once more fulminate against Home Rule to a public whose concern for the maintenance for the Union had merely remained latent since the last Liberal defeat in 1895. Furthermore, in presenting these admittedly useful letters and memoranda as evidence they neglect firstly to examine what senior Liberals thought

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[117] Report dated 4 January 1911: PRONI, D1327/2/1
[118] 'Need for an Autumn Campaign', Steel-Maitland Papers, NAS/GD/193/80/5/43
[119] Lord Brassey to William O'Brien, 18 November 1910, quoted in John Kendle, *Ireland and the Federal Solution: The Debate Over the United Kingdom Constitution* (Kingston, Ontario: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), p. 127
[120] F. E. Smith to Austen Chamberlain, 20 October 1910, in, the Second Earl of Birkenhead, *The Life of F. E. Smith, The First Earl of Birkenhead* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1959), p. 156

of the same issue - which often stood in marked contrast to the opinions of their Unionist counterparts - and secondly they ignore the popular demonstrations against Home Rule that *subsequently* occurred throughout the country. Many senior Unionists did not anticipate how things would evolve in Ulster once the Liberals presented the Third Home Rule Bill, and, perhaps even more importantly, how this would play in mainland Britain. It will not do, therefore, to accept the initial myopia of the Tory establishment to the potential that Ireland presented (predictions that were often made years before the crucial period after 1912) as the definitive verdict on popular opinion.

It is instructive therefore to compare the premature gloom of many Unionists, with the wariness of the government over the issue, as it seems that there was serious apprehension on the Liberal benches with regard to the public's reaction to any plans for Irish Home Rule. In 1906 the Liberal leader Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman had been careful to remain guarded over the Irish question.[121] Asquith himself had put it quite simply: Home Rule would 'wreck the fortunes of the Party for the next twenty years.'[122] What is more, the Liberal rank and file seemed to predict what Irish diversions foretold for their Party. The *Times* reported from their conference in the Albert Hall in 1909 that Asquith's announcement that a Dublin Parliament was now an official Liberal policy was met with no little foreboding by an otherwise buoyant audience: 'in a meeting boiling over with enthusiasm ... the PM's inclusion of [Home Rule] produced a sensation of surprise and coldness. There was comparatively little cheering, and even that was without vigour.'[123] Perhaps they were immediately reminded of the doomed flight of the 'Hawarden Kite' in 1885 and the wilderness years that began in the same decade.[124] Maybe they saw Ireland as an unnecessary distraction from more pressing matters of social reform. At any rate, they obviously thought it significant, either as a harbinger of electoral defeat, or merely as an unwelcome distraction that the Tories could and would make great play of. Therefore, it was the skittishness of high ranking Liberals rather than the unduly despondent Unionists that was most percipient. For once the agenda was shifted onto an issue that remained the *sine qua non* of the Unionist coalition, the Liberals had reason to be nervous.

The Party of Gladstone had been severely chastened by their removal from office in 1886. They had condemned to almost a generation of hopeless opposition, and it was obvious that Ireland had been the fountainhead of their misery. Salisbury's new Unionist Coalition had skilfully, and with great conviction, played upon the importance of Ireland as an imperial issue, as Salisbury himself put it 'the integrity of the Empire is more precious to us than any possession we can have'[125], and he spelled out in the clearest possible terms what an independent Ireland would mean to British security, as the Irish coast 'would be something more than a pistol held to the mouths of the Clyde, the

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[121] H. W. McCready, 'Home Rule and the Liberal Party, 1899-1906', *Irish Historical Studies*, 13 (1963), p. 324
[122] J. R. Fanning, 'The Unionist Party and Ireland', *Irish Historical Studies*, 15, 58 (1966), p. 148
[123] *Times*, 11 December 1909
[124] This was the instance when Gladstone announced from his home, Hawarden in North Wales, that he now supported Irish Home Rule.
[125] Andrew Roberts, *Salisbury: Victorian Titan* (London: Phoenix, 2000), p. 363.

Mersey, and the Severn.'[126] It is no surprise to learn therefore that throughout the late 1890s and early 1900s 'the feeling was widespread in the Liberal ranks that home-rule policies would condemn their Party to perpetual exclusion from office.'[127]

The harsh realisation that Home Rule was such an electoral liability for the Liberals was a hard lesson painfully learned, and subsequently Irish questions were to be studiously avoided while the Liberals busied themselves with their re-invention as the Party of social reform. Therefore Ireland was deliberately, and perhaps decisively, left unmentioned by the Liberals in the elections of 1906,[128] the reasons for doing so were spelled out by Asquith himself 'if we were to get a real majority in the next House of Commons, it can only be by making it perfectly clear to the electorate that ... it will be no part of the policy of the Liberal Government to introduce a Home Rule bill in the next parliament.'[129] That was all very well as long they had a workable majority; once they did not, they were in trouble. One Liberal peer, Viscount Wolverhampton, thought as much, and foresaw in the resurrection of the Irish question nought but danger and difficulty. 'It would be more bitterly fought than in Gladstone's time', he remarked, 'and I am afraid that it will break the Liberal Party.'[130]

Thus many Liberal MPs astutely decided that discretion was the better part of valour; and in the December election of 1910 it is important to note that only 39 per cent of the successful Liberal candidates referred to Home Rule, despite Asquith having being forced to concede that Home Rule was official Liberal policy.[131] When Balfour, the Unionist leader, had earlier demanded a separate election on the Irish question the Liberals had reacted nervously, and with good reason. For once the early pollings in that election revealed that the Irish Nationalists would hold the balance in the Commons, 'the air became thick with Unionist taunts that the Liberals were afraid to trust the people on Home Rule.'[132] Moreover, it is revealing that when the King suggested to the Prime Minister in 1913 that an election should be held before Home Rule was introduced, 'Asquith was unwilling to agree, both on constitutional grounds, and because any election held over Home Rule would favour the Unionists.'[133]

Home Rule once more became the central political battleground in a large part thanks to the appointment of a new Unionist leader. The erudite and eloquent Arthur Balfour had led the Unionist Party since 1902, but in the increasingly partisan atmosphere that pervaded Edwardian politics he was seen as too much of a gentleman to trouble the

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[126] Lord Salisbury, 'Disintegration', Paul Smith, ed., *Lord Salisbury on Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 375.
[127] Alan O'Day, 'Irish Home Rule and Liberalism', Alan O'Day, ed., *The Edwardian Age: Conflict and Stability* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979), p. 121
[128] Patricia Jalland, *The Liberals and Ireland: the Ulster Question in British Politics to 1914* (Aldershot: Gregg Revivals, 1983), p. 24
[129] O'Day, 'Irish Home Rule', pp. 123-124
[130] Jalland, *Liberals and Ireland*, p. 16
[131] Blewett, *Peers*, p. 324
[132] Blewett, *Peers*, p. 191
[133] Powell, *Edwardian Crisis*, p. 149

Liberals.[134] Thus in December 1911 Andrew Bonar Law, the archetypal stern, plain speaking Scot was installed as Unionist leader. Bonar Law's leadership was crucial in guiding the Unionists to such extremes over Ulster, and much has been made of his Canadian upbringing, in a family of Ulster Scots descent, which supposedly gave him personal reasons for sympathising with the Irish Loyalists. Some have went further: describing his leadership as marking the first infiltration of the 'poor white tendency' into the modern Conservative Party.[135] But for this unsentimental politician there was a more powerful motive for supporting Ulster than familial ties, or anything as emotional as tribal identification. He knew that Ulster could win an election for the Unionist Party. Note his famously seditious declaration at Blenheim Palace in 1912, usually written off as mere bluster:

> I can imagine no length of resistance to which Ulster can go in which I would not be prepared to support them, and in which, in my belief, they would not be supported by the overwhelming majority of the British people.[136]

We may quibble whether Ulster enjoyed the support of the 'overwhelming majority', but the numbers were far from inconsequential. How could they not be? Consider the lengths the Tories were prepared to go to between 1911 and 1914. Whether in the temptation to undermine the armed forces through the holding up of the Army Act and defending the Curragh 'mutineers', or by supporting the arming of a citizen military force in Ulster, they were obviously very serious.[137] One historian has concluded, with a degree of bafflement, that Conservative Party support for Ulster was based on 'something other than political manoeuvring and rational calculation.'[138] This is only partially correct, as it just so happened that the defence of the Union was an issue that was coincidentally both a vote winner and an ancient and fundamental Conservative totem. This was something that was not always rational, or even ethical, but in the first years of the reign of King George V this was, in many respects, all they had. That is why militant Carsonism and all that it represented enjoyed such support among a section of the British public, as 'he articulated dramatically and effectively the prejudices that ran deep in a Party in the throws of despair at the decline of Tory England.'[139]

It seems strange therefore that some of the major historians of the Conservative Party have spluttered so much about Unionist behaviour between 1911 and 1914. The official history of the Party contends that Bonar Law 'approved [of] and supported the destruction of both the practice and authority of parliament.'[140] Even the normally sympathetic Lord Blake criticised the Party leader for breaking 'the conventions upon

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[134] Peter Fraser, 'The Unionist Debacle of 1911 and Balfour's Retirement', *The Journal of Modern History*, 35, 4 (1963)
[135] Roy Jenkins, *The Chancellors* (London: Papermac, 1998), p. 207
[136] *Times*, 29 July 1912.
[137] I. Beckett, ed., *The Army and the Curragh Incident* (London: Army Records Society 1986)
[138] Thomas C. Kennedy, '"The Gravest situation of our lives": Conservatives, Ulster, and the Home Rule Crisis', *Eire-Ireland*, 36, 2 (2001)
[139] Gailey, *King Carson*, p. 77
[140] John Ramsden, *The Age of Balfour and Baldwin, 1902-1940* (London: Longman, 1978), p. 85

which parliamentary democracy is based.'[141] Yet this ascribes a piety to Conservative politicians that was uncharacteristic; and, in so doing, failing to acknowledge that this was an area in which the Tories had traditionally been successful – and, indeed, considering how the political landscape had changed after 1906 there were few other roads down which a *Unionist* bandwagon could travel. So although they may not have been as accomplished as the Liberals in this period at reconfiguring their support amongst the working classes, it is enlightening that the Tories turned to Ulster with such 'undiscriminating enthusiasm.'[142] For despite dabbling with a plethora of causes such as Tariff Reform and 'Home Rule all Round', the Union remained their *raison d'être* - and it was what they were good at. [143]

'Opposition to Home Rule', one author has claimed, 'enabled the Unionists to appeal to the atavistic forces of English nationalism against Celtic particularism, thereby reviving a vital component in the popular imperialism which had contributed to their electoral success in the 1890s.'[144] Moreover, it has also been argued that making the connection between Irish and Imperial issues 'enabled Conservatives to complete the process of Imperial identification begun by Disraeli at Manchester and the Crystal Palace in 1872.'[145] On a Party political level this issue would also provide a rallying cry for the fractured Unionists: as Bonar Law's explicit support for Ulster would allow the Tories to overcome 'the weakness of dissension inherited from Balfour's regime; it would give them something that they would really believe in fighting for.'[146] Nevertheless, it was only after the two elections of 1910, fought not on the Irish question, but on the Budget and the reform of the House of Lords respectively, that the Tories, in realising the predicament of the Liberals, could smell blood.

Herein lies the crucial point about the political debate in Britain before it was silenced by 'the guns of August'. For it was only by championing a cause that had its roots in the mists of British history, and in so doing pandering to ancient prejudice, that the Unionists could make their presence felt in a changing political landscape. Although one historian has argued, from a high political perspective, that the issue of Ireland divided Unionists as much as it united them, he does admit that it was 'a chance for the Conservatives to counter the Liberal court cards of social reform and the land campaign with the low trumps of popular Protestantism and the 'Union in danger''[147] In a way Tariff reform had been too controversial, and often simply too complex: it had not 'represented the nation';

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[141] Robert Blake, *The Unknown Prime Minister* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1955), p. 130
[142] Paul Bew, *Ideology and the Irish Question: Ulster Unionism and Irish Nationalisms, 1912-16* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 24
[143] E. H. H. Green, 'Radical Conservatism: the electoral genesis of Tariff Reform', *Historical Journal*, (1985); J. E. Kendle, 'The Round Table Movement and Home Rule all round', *Historical Journal*, 11 (1968)
[144] Powell, *Edwardian Crisis Britain*, p. 159
[145] Stephen Evans, 'The Conservatives and the redefinition of Unionism, 1912-21', *20th Century British History*, 9 (1998), p. 4
[146] A. P. Ryan, *Mutiny at the Curragh* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1956), p. 20.
[147] E. H. H. Green, *The Crisis of Conservatism: The Politics, Economics and Ideology of the British Conservative Party, 1880-1914* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 297. This is also a theme taken up in Richard Murphy, 'Faction in the Conservative Party and the Home Rule Crisis, 1912-1914', *History*, 71 (1986).

but there could be no doubt that 'resuming the defence of the Union and then, in the face of political reality, in undertaking the practical residual commitment to the redoubt of Loyalist Ulster ... it was doing just that,'[148] and 'for the first time since 1900 it could identify itself with the 'national cause.''[149]

Careful analysis of the elections of 1910 reveals that this had a significant impact on British voters, as the Unionists steadily recouped seats lost in the 1906 landslide, so that by December 1910 the two parties were tied on 272 seats each, which is all the more remarkable considering how limited the Unionist platform was. So despite the seeming popularity of Liberal progressivism 'Home Rule was as unpopular as ever' and this was confirmed in the sporadic by-elections after 1910 in which the Unionists performed strongly.[150] That being the case it is apparent then that contrary to those who believe that the Conservatives were by then enduring a crisis, in fact, by 1913 they 'had rarely been stronger in the councils of the land, or indeed more poised for success in the forthcoming election.'[151]

VI

Sir Edward Carson's campaign outside of Ireland between late 1911 and the outbreak of the Great War in 1914 took him to towns and cities across Britain. It is therefore vital to catalogue and carefully to examine the places in England and Scotland that he chose to visit, and indeed chose to invite him. In the North of England he spoke at major anti-Home Rule demonstrations at Liverpool three times, in Manchester twice and once each at Newcastle, Durham, Leeds, Sheffield, Chester, Birkenhead, Bolton and Blackburn. Likewise, in the Midlands, he addressed large audiences in Birmingham, Nottingham, Lincoln, and Norwich; and in the South, he was invited to speak in Torquay, Bristol, Plymouth, and Truro; as well as twice in the capital – at Hyde Park, and Herne Hill in South London. He also spoke once in South Wales. In Scotland he orated at Inverness, Perth, Dundee, and Edinburgh, and twice in Glasgow. In addition Carson was also called to make impromptu speeches to large crowds at provincial railway stations – rather like Gladstone's Midlothian campaign – at Exeter, Northampton, Pontypool, Rugby, Crewe, Carlisle, Berwick, Darlington and York; and he intervened rather successfully at a by-election in Ipswich.

The speaking programmes of Andrew Bonar Law, James Craig, F. E. Smith and others reveal a similar geographical spread. Likewise, the League of British Covenanters opened temporary offices for the collection of signatures in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Newcastle, Leeds, York, Sheffield, Liverpool, Manchester, Nottingham, Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff and Plymouth.[152] What is important about all this is that these locations

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[148] Grainger, *Patriotisms*, p. 242.
[149] Robert Blake, *The Conservative Party from Peel to Thatcher* (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 195
[150] Peter Clarke, *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900-1990* (London: Penguin, 1997), p. 68
[151] C. P. Cook, and A. Sked, *Crisis and Controversy* (London: Macmillan, 1976), p. 63
[152] *Times*, 5 March 1914

reveal the dominance of Northern England (or Northern Britain if we include Scotland) on Carson's campaign trail, and this geographical pattern is worth exploring for the light it throws on the support Ulster that enjoyed across the Irish Sea.[153]

Economically, industrially, culturally, and, of course, in terms of population, the North of Britain was a much more important place at the beginning of the twentieth century than it has become one hundred years later. Throughout the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries the North and Midlands of England and the central belt of Scotland generated the wealth which, by and large, underwrote Britain's imperial strength, and naturally these places had the largest populations (47 per cent of England's population were concentrated within six areas: Greater London, South-East Lancashire, the West Midlands, West Yorkshire, Merseyside and Tyneside).[154] In addition, their economic and industrial dominance was reflected by the political influence which the 'provinces' enjoyed - in a way that may come as a surprise to the modern reader, accustomed to the overweening supremacy of London and the South East.

For this was a time when metropolitan influence on the provinces was perhaps at its weakest; a period when 'regional autonomy authorised the political strength of the provincial towns'.[155] One historian has shown us that an impressive assortment of popular political, and even religious, organisations had their provenance in the provinces. Movements such as Methodism, Chartism, Luddism, and the Anti-Corn Law League, through to Co-operation and the Independent Labour Party, and beyond to Tariff Reform, the Women's Social and Political Union and even the Football League were either founded in the provinces or were at least strongest away from London.[156]

Analysis of this geographical dichotomy had deep roots. In 1855, Elizabeth Gaskell published her novel *North and South* an exploration of the contrast between the staid and quiet rural world of the south with noisy, forceful world of industrial Lancashire.[157] Sixty years later, this comparison was still valid and another author, the Marxist Robert Tressell, thought that the divergence had political implications. For he thought that the

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[153] It is interesting to note that Carson visited the four cities studied in Harrison's *Crowds and History*, Liverpool, Manchester, Norwich, and Bristol, pp. 57-102

[154] G. R. Searle, *A New England? Peace and War, 1886-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 86

[155] P. Hudson, *The Industrial Revolution* (London: Edward Arnold, 1992), p. 105; Phillip Howell, 'Industry and Identity: the North-South divide and the geography of belonging, 1830-1918', Alan R. H. Baker and Mark Billinge, eds, *Geographies of England: The North South Divide, Imagined and Material* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 79. Other works that stress the influence and independence of the north include J. Langton, 'The industrial revolution and the regional geography of England', Transactions of the Institute of British geographers, 9 (1984), p. 145-67; E. A. Wrigley, *Continuity, Chance, and Change: The Character of the Industrial Revolution in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); R. Lawton and C. G. Pooley, *Britain 1740-1950: An Historical Geography* (London: Edward Arnold, 1992)

[156] Donald Read, *The English Provinces, 1760-1960: A Study of Influence* (London: Edward Arnold, 1964)

[157] For an analysis of the significance of Gaskell's and other's work see: D. C. D. Pocock, 'The Novelists image of the North', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 4 (1978), pp. 62-76 and P. Goetsch, 'North and South in Victorian Fiction', *Journal for the Study of British Cultures*, 3 (1996), pp. 15-29

South typically produced men like his creation Bob Crass who, on the great issues of the day would respond 'Ain't thought much about it, I don't never worry my 'ed about politics.'[158] In other words, for a number of Victorian and Edwardian commentators, the North was industrially dynamic, politically engaged, wealthy, and influential; whereas, in contrast, London and the Southern shires seemed rural, regressive, and politically ossified. Although we should be wary of over-simplification, the very fact that these views were widely held is important in itself.[159]

In 1912 (incidentally the year of Carson's first massive demonstration in England) an historian writing about London described this gulf between the North and South as 'almost a national danger'. He foresaw a radical shift in the balance of power between the capital and the provinces, 'someone will one day shift the English capital northwards, and the government will follow the London newspapers, which have already begun to open their offices in Manchester.'[160] Indeed, the founder of the *Daily Mail*, Alfred Harmsworth, appreciated that the lion's share of political power in Britain was not necessarily located in London, and he 'had great respect for the vigour of provincial life', once declaring that the country was 'ruled by the 'sturdy folk' of the North of England.'[161]

In fact, the press was an important aspect of the independence of the provinces. Read reminds us that thanks to improvements in communications (and until the rise of the nationally popular titles like the *Daily Mail*) 'the influence of the leading provincial newspapers was very large in their respective regions.' By 1885, 47 of the larger provincial towns had daily papers, and throughout the 1880s the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Yorkshire Post* were both selling between 30,000 and 40,000 copies daily, the *Birmingham Post* about 27,000 and the *Liverpool Post* about 20,000. By 1921, '[forty-one] morning newspapers were produced in provincial England, Scotland and Wales, and thirteen cities outside London had more than one local daily paper' (although this figure had almost halved by 1957).[162]

The power and vigour of the provinces was recognised by many prominent political figures: these included Lloyd George, who wrote privately at the time of his contempt for the 'semi-feudal south.'[163] For the sleepy Home Counties provided an obvious contrast with the thrusting urban constituencies of the North and the Midlands, where many of the important political leaders of the time held seats at certain times: Arthur Balfour and Winston Churchill in Manchester; Bonar Law and F. E. Smith in Liverpool; H. H. Asquith (and when unseated in Manchester, Churchill) in industrial Scotland; and the

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[158] Robert Tressell, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* (London: Flamingo, 1991), p. 21.
[159] See also C. Dellheim, 'Imagining England: Victorian views of the North', *Northern History*, 22 (1986), pp.218-9; although Phillip Howell argues that the prominence of the north has sometimes been overplayed, see 'Industry and identity', p. 73
[160] Sir Laurence Gomme, *London* (1914), quoted in Read, *English Provinces*, p. 272
[161] Read, *English Provinces*, p. 248
[162] Read, *English Provinces*,p. 249
[163] Clarke, *Lancashire*, p. 8.

Chamberlains – Joseph, Austen, and Neville – in Birmingham.[164] What all these men recognised, along with Gladstone, Disraeli, and Salisbury before them, was that even if you had no personal connection to the great provincial cities it was there that you had to state your case and build support, as perhaps a majority of the important political battles were won away from Westminster and indeed the South in general. Other authors have seen a forceful 'claim to provincial identity and national significance' in the swaggering pretension of municipal buildings; and others have noted simply that the north was reborn in the nineteenth century as an 'urban, industrial bourgeois civilisation' of power and significance.[165] Lancashire in particular was seen as being of crucial importance: in the vivid phrase of Peter Clarke, it was 'the cockpit of British elections.'[166]

Some authors writing at the end of the twentieth century have perhaps failed to appreciate the more even geographical dispersal of political power that existed in Edwardian Britain. Take for example this seemingly reasonable comment that appeared in a recent study of British social and political history, 'a civil war in Ireland, might have led to some violence in Liverpool and Glasgow, but most of the population of the mainland would certainly have remained indifferent.'[167] Leaving aside his second assertion of widespread indifference, there are reasons to quibble with that first statement for it makes a costly underestimation of the power of the provinces. For the implication of disturbances in those cities in 1913 would have been much graver than the Toxteth riots in 1980 for example. For in the years before the Great War these places were not the remote, exhausted museums of Britain's industrial and imperial past that they were to become.

Indeed, Glaswegian brio was such that they compared themselves to imperial Venice and they gloried in the epithet of 'the first municipality in the world and the second city of the British Empire.'[168] The city's high profile was also reflected in the prominence of famous Glaswegians: a businessman from Kelvinside, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, became Prime Minister in 1906, and another, albeit adopted Glaswegian, Andrew Bonar Law was elected leader of the Unionist Party in 1911. Likewise, Liverpool was the only municipality to have a London office, and its peculiar mode of civic governance was unlike anything ever seen in Britain.[169] Indeed, it was during these years that cities like Liverpool in particular reached the absolute apogee of their influence as generators of wealth, and opinion. 'The Edwardian years', wrote John Belchem in his important work

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[164] Birmingham 'Provided the source of their considerable wealth, an unrivalled arena for municipal endeavour, and the base from which they sustained themselves in parliamentary politics', David Cannadine, *In Churchill's Shadow* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 125; p. 117

[165] M. Daunton 'Introduction', M. Daunton, ed., *The Cambridge urban history of Britain Vol. III: 1840-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 43; S. J. D. Green, 'In search of bourgeois civilisation: institutions and ideal in nineteenth century Britain', *Northern History*, 28 (1992), p. 231

[166] Clarke, *Lancashire*, p. vii

[167] Martin Pugh, *State and Society: British Political and Social History, 1870-1992* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 138. Jeremy Smith makes a similar point, although he does not play down the seriousness of 'sympathy riots' in Glasgow and Liverpool, *Tories and Ireland*, p. 44

[168] John M. MacKenzie, 'The Second City of the Empire': Glasgow - imperial municipality', Felix Driver and David Gilbert, *Imperial Cities: Landscape, Display and Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p.215

[169] Belchem, *Merseypride*. p. 13

Merseypride, 'were to prove Liverpool's climacteric'.[170] This was not known at the time however; therefore we should not become hostages to the present: a time when most political and economic power has been arrogated to London and the South East.

What makes Northern Britain (in this case Scotland and Northern England combined) central to our story therefore, is the combination of political influence deposited within its cities, impressive levels of political engagement among ordinary people, ethnic antagonism with the huge numbers of Irish who migrated to the north,[171] and the role played by the Empire in terms of industry, commerce, and administration, and the implications this had for politics and culture. Thus, in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the North had responded enthusiastically to campaigns which endorsed strident notions of Imperial patriotism. Ellis Ashmead Bartlett, the founder of the (Conservative) Patriotic Association in the 1880s 'had a substantial following in the North of England.'[172] Another frequent speaker in this part of the country was Lord Salisbury, where, it is claimed, his twin shibboleths of 'religion and empire', 'went down very well with his audiences in the North',[173] and this leitmotif was easily transposed onto the Home Rule question as Salisbury's representation of the Union

> drew upon, and aligned with, a populist, nationalistic, anti-Catholic and anti-Irish tradition, that was long established in many working class communities particularly Lancashire and parts of the north-east. These prejudices connected the Party to sections of working class support [at a crucial time of electoral expansion].[174]

Recent important work has emphasised how 'urban Toryism was frequently more plebeian', and this was particularly true in the North, especially Lancashire, where 'Orangeism, Freemasonry, Evangelical Protestantism and the traditions of Oastler and the operative Conservative associations, all helped to sustain a vibrant and broad-based Conservatism,'[175] and that this has been corroborated by recent work done on Liverpool, Preston, Salford and other North-Western towns.[176] One historian of Lancashire has argued that 'the sectarian spirit and the nonconformist conscience were ... losing their

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[170] John Belchem, *Merseypride: Essays in Liverpool Exceptionalism* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), p. 25

[171] MacRaild, *Irish Migrants*, pp. 54-56

[172] Cunningham, 'Conservative Party and Patriotism', p. 285.

[173] E. D. Steele, 'Lord Salisbury and his Northern audiences', *Northern History*, 31 (1995), p.232

[174] Jeremy Smith, 'Conservative Ideology and Representations of the Union with Ireland, 1885-1914', Martin Francis and Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, eds, *The Conservatives and British Society, 1880-1980* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996), p. 23

[175] Jon Lawrence, 'Class and Gender', p. 632

[176] R. L. Greenall, 'Popular Conservatism in Salford, 1868-1886', *Northern History*, ix (1974), 123-38; P. J. Waller, *Democracy and Sectarianism*; J. Smith, Labour Tradition in Glasgow and Liverpool', *History* Workshop Journal, xvii (Spring, 1984), p. 33, 39-40, 46; M. Savage, *The Dynamics of Working Class Politics: The Labour Movement in Preston, 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); G. Trodd, 'Political Change and the Working Class in Blackburn and Burnley, 1880-1914' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Lancaster, 1978); P. F. Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*; P. Joyce, 'Popular Toryism in Lancashire, 1860-1890' (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1975).

magic, except in Liverpool', but this spirit had not entirely disappeared.[177] Moreover, throughout the 1880s and 1890s the Unionists had made impressive progress among the working class electorate in other parts of the country, notably London, Nottingham, Newcastle, Wolverhampton, and some of the ports on the south coast as well.[178] Similarly, in Leeds and Bradford the Conservative Club movement made significant headway, opening 'the working man and his family to ideological influences, however tenuous, including them in a social group from which they might take their political values.'[179] Put simply, Salisbury had constructed 'an English, British, Nationalist, and Protestant patriotic alliance', which in many respects was the most appealing aspect of the Unionist Party to the ordinary voter, and remained their default fallback position until the Great War.[180]

In this sense the Unionist resurgence from 1910 onwards was predicated upon the enduring sectarian topography of urban Britain before 1914. For this was assuredly an 'age of localism'.[181] Therefore it is important to recognise the extent to which '[political] ideas were filtered by localized social and economic structures and processes of communication and popular culture', and that we would do well to recall how vital was the 'politics of locality' and 'the peculiarities of place'.[182] Thus when we identify those places in Britain with a noticeable Irish population or a distinctive religious profile then we find that these are the areas where you are most likely to find enthusiastic supporters of the Union and Empire. 'Akin to Western Scotland in its concern over Home Rule was Lancashire', argued one historian, as 'here too religious divisions were important – before 1914 there was a good correlation between a high proportion of Roman Catholics and Conservative electoral success through the back-lash vote.'[183] Neal Blewett would concur with this point. Arguing in his exhaustive study of the two elections of 1910, he noted that Unionist gains had been particularly noticeable in Scotland, the South Western Peninsula and 'Lancastria', largely because these areas all had in common 'a sensitivity to ... Home Rule.' What is more, it was the 'revival of anti-Irish sentiment [that was] at least [a] partial explanation for the pro-Unionist movement in Lancastria and

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[177] John K. Walton, *Lancashire: A Social History, 1558-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), p. 279

[178] On London, see D. Feldman, 'The importance of Being English: Jewish immigration and the Decay of Liberal England' D. Feldman and G. S. Jones, eds, *Metropolis: London Histories and Representations since 1800* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 56-84; R. Samuel, *East End Underworld: Chapters in the Life of Arthur Harding* (London: Routledge 1981), ch. 21; for other places see H. Pelling, *Social Geography of British Elections, 1885-1910* (London: Macmillan, 1967), pp. 207-10, 324-5; P. Wyncoll, *The Nottingham Labour Movement, 1880-1939* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985), p. 188; J. Lawrence, 'Popular Politics and the Limitations of Party: Wolverhampton, 1867-1900', E. F. Biagini and A. Reid, *Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics in Britain, 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), ch. 6

[179] Christopher Stevens, 'The Conservative Club movement in the industrial West Riding', *Northern History*, 38: 1, March (2001), p. 142

[180] D. G. Boyce, *The Irish Question and British Politics, 1868-1986* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), p. 32

[181] R. Price, *British Society, 1680-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 183

[182] Marc Brodie, *The Politics of the Poor: The East End of London, 1885-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2004) p. 12; Lawrence, *Speaking for the People*, p. 6

[183] J. P. D. Dunbabin, 'British elections in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a regional approach', *English Historical Review*, 375 (1980), p. 251

Scotland."[184] The Unionist resurgence in Lancashire and Scotland may have been as a result of the strong Irish component and accompanying sectarian culture of those places.[185]

Thus, in the early twentieth century, religion continued to trespass into the political sphere, so often as not to be considered unusual. Indeed, in later life Asquith would recall his experiences as a English carpet-bagger, trying to get nominated as the candidate for East Fife in Scotland (who, thanks to his agent preventing him from getting the Sunday ferry from Burntisland, narrowly avoided transgressing the Sabbath and offending Protestant sensibilities). He remembered that one gentleman on the selection panel 'whose mind dwelt exclusively on the impending massacre of the Ulster Protestants', was inclined to think that Asquith was not a 'fit or proper person to represent the constituency.'[186] It is clear then that sectarianism was a phenomenon not only confined to the big cities, as it has been noted, for example, that many of the miners in Lancashire were stalwart Orangemen;[187]as was much of the working class in the central belt of Scotland, and the North East of England.[188] It is surely revealing that when Walter Long surveyed the strength of anti-Home Rule opinion in September 1912 four out of the five cities he canvassed were in the north (Bradford, Liverpool, Newcastle, Manchester and Bristol).[189]

Therefore the staunch factionalism of these disparate parts of industrial Britain made them particularly receptive to Unionist belligerence, and it was these areas that dominated the Party's campaign trail. So although many historians have noted the increasing separation of the Ulster Unionist Council from the patrician leaders of the British Conservative Party as Belfast industrialists replaced Irish aristocrats.[190] However, even if linkages between elites were diminishing, the solidarity between the peoples of the United Kingdom, in terms of religion and demographics, remained strong (and will be explored in greater depth in the following chapters) and was often evoked by Unionist stump speakers in this period.

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[184] Blewett, *Peers*, p. 411

[185] For studies of sectarian conflict in Liverpool see Frank Neal, *Sectarian Violence: The Liverpool Experience, 1819-1914* (Liverpool: Newsham, 2003) and P. J. Waller, *Democracy and Sectarianism: A Social and Political History of Liverpool, 1868-1939* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press 1981); and for Glasgow see Tom Gallagher, *Glasgow: The Uneasy Peace* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987). For a general overview of anti-Irishness and anti-Catholicism in urban Britain see MacRaild, *Irish Migrants in Modern Britain, 1750-1922* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 155-185

[186] Hill, *Edwardian Scotland*, p. 89

[187] Pelling, *Popular Politics*, p. 113

[188] Elaine McFarland, *Protestants First: Orangeism in Nineteenth Century Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990); Frank Neal, 'English-Irish Conflict in the north-east of England', Patrick Buckland, and John Belchem, eds, *The Irish in British Labour History* (Conference Proceedings in Irish Studies, i, Liverpool, 1993)

[189] At that early stage, according to Long, only Liverpool and Manchester were registering any significant anti-Home Rule sentiment. See letter from Walter Long to Andrew Bonar Law, March 1912. HLRO, BLP 26/1/76

[190] Smith, *Tories and Ireland*, p. 16

So, to discover where opposition to Irish Home Rule was most virulent in Britain it is to the larger Northern cities that we must look. For although a Unionist electoral agent despondently assumed in 1912 (and of course the earliness of the year is also important) that 'there was 'far too much apathy in Great Britain [regarding Home Rule]',[191] we should be mindful that he had been campaigning in Maidstone, a town in the politically inert South of England, and not in the great metropolises of the North. To be sure there were impressive demonstrations against Home Rule in the South, in Salisbury in 1912, several West Country towns in 1913, and in Tunbridge Wells (where Rudyard Kipling voiced his support for the Curragh 'mutineers'), and London in 1914 which will all be analysed closely. But this was not the norm, and should be compared with Carson's peregrinations which were predominantly Northern in their compass. For that reason it is helpful for us to recognise the extent to which this geographical and political division existed well into the twentieth century, as it can be argued that the last time that the capital had to politically genuflect to Northern Britain came during the later Edwardian years: a period that requires careful re-examination.

[191] Pugh, *Tories and the People*, p. 165

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The Lesson of Craigavon:
Orange Ulster anticipates Nuremberg

To anyone interested in the progress and prosperity of Ireland and the maintenance of the Union, the exemplary order, sobriety, and, above all, the determination of the vast gathering of loyal subjects of the King must have been a supreme gratification.

The Lesson of Craigavon. The Voice of Ulster: "We Will Not Have Home Rule" (Belfast, 1911)

The manner in which the Ulster Unionists appealed to the British public is illuminating. Displaying a keen perception of the prevailing cultural atmosphere of Edwardian Britain, these Belfast businessmen ruthlessly exploited public opinion with a mixture of modern salesmanship and old fashioned Orange showmanship. The personification of such commercial and political nous was Captain James Craig. Craig was a millionaire Whiskey distiller who had gone into Unionist politics; and this business background provided the Unionists with a solid platform for Carson's rhetorical flair. He was the organiser, the man who made sure that Carson - the personification of the Ulster campaign - received maximum exposure. As one historian has perceptively noted 'Carson was marketed with much the same vigour as was applied to Sunlight Soap, or to Dunville's whiskey, and it was of course Craig who acted as the marketing manager.'[1] And like any other businessman he was eager to iron out any problems on the Belfast factory floor before export for English consumption could profitably begin.

The first of the 'monster' demonstrations that came to characterize the campaign against Home Rule throughout the United Kingdom took place on 23 September 1911 in the grounds of Craigavon, Craig's stately country seat outside Belfast. It was convened so that Carson, newly elected leader of the Ulster Unionists, could be presented to the people of the Province. Craig undertook the formidable logistical enterprise of facilitating that afternoon the arrival of over 50,000 people, representing Unionist Clubs and Orange Lodges from all over Ireland. This involved the synchronization of trains, stewards, marshals, marchers, and bands, not to mention orators from England and a deputation of Welsh sympathisers from Merionethshire - a considerable achievement.[2]

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[1] Dunville's was the Craig brand, Alvin Jackson, 'Unionist Myths, 1912-85', *Past and Present* , 134 (1992), p. 169

[2] At a breakfast lunch in Belfast Mr Williams of Dolgelly, and Mr D. D. Roberts of Festiniog said 'Ulster could rely on Wales standing by them in their hour of need', *Belfast Telegraph*, 25 September 1911

Yet despite the size of this throng, those in attendance all managed to catch a glimpse of their new champion - his platform had been advantageously constructed at the top of a hill - and hear him declare to rousing cheers that 'we must be prepared ... the morning Home Rule passes, ourselves to become responsible for the government of the Protestant Province of Ulster.'[3] 'Altogether it was an impressive display of solidarity by the ordinary people of Ulster', wrote A.T.Q. Stewart in his classic *Ulster Crisis*; but it would have come to nought without Craig, who 'had revealed a distinct flair for this kind of popular organisation.'[4]

The Unionist leadership was so delighted with the smooth organisation of this rally that they produced a little known document, which can still be found in the private papers of James Craig, entitled 'The Lesson of Craigavon. The Voice of Ulster: "We Will Not Have Home Rule."' Whether or not this small booklet was widely read is unknown, but in retrospect, it would appear that - considering the activities of Ulster Unionist propagandists in Britain before 1914 - it may have become something of a textbook for the successful organisation and arrangement of spectacular political meetings.

This document seems to convey an acute understanding of the impression made by large scale political processions. It thought that the parade from Belfast to Craigavon had been 'remarkable' first of all

> for its dimensions: though the men walked four abreast it took them over two hours to pass any given spot. It was a striking symbol of the solidarity as well as the strength of Unionist opinion, and no one could witness it without recognising the power and reality of a cause that could claim such stalwart adherents.[5]

In its obvious admiration for the procession's 'dimensions', 'strength', and 'power' the booklet anticipates much of what made interwar Fascist demonstrations so effective as political theatre.[6] Furthermore the militaristic demeanour of the rally makes the Fascist analogy even more obvious:

> The constitution of the serried ranks afforded a no less striking object lesson than their numerical impressiveness ... No one who witnessed the perfect discipline with which the teeming thousands took their position in the ranks could fail to be impressed with the Ulsterman's innate sense of orderliness and obedience. There was an utter absence of excitement or confusion, and the procession gradually grew and took shape with an

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[3] *Times*, 25 September 1911

[4] A.T.Q. Stewart, *The Ulster Crisis: Resistance to Home Rule, 1912-1914*, (1967; London: Blackstaff, 1997), p. 47

[5] *The Lesson of Craigavon The Voice of Ulster: "We Will Not Have Home Rule"* (Belfast, 1911), p. 6. PRONI, D/1415/E/16

[6] There are a number of authors who have made the connection between strident Edwardian Unionists and Depression-era Fascism, for example Norman Stone, *Europe Transformed* (Glasgow: Fontana, 1983), p. 127. Some Irish Nationalist historians were particularly keen to stress the similarities between the UVF and Fascism, see F. X. Martin, '1916: Myth, Fact, and Mystery', *Studia Hibernica*, 7 (1967)

> economy of movement that was significantly suggestive of facilities more military than civil.'[7]

It is of some consequence that those who organised the Craigavon gathering ascribed almost exactly the same meaning to such activity as the press invariably did, with a similarly multi-layered message of defiance, solidarity, and aggression - first articulated at the home of James Craig - repeated at every other anti-Home Rule demonstration from Inverness to Truro. Thus, much was made by the author of the meeting's 'representative character', as '[i]ncluded in its ranks were men differing widely on many subjects, but united as one man on the great question of the hour, and willing to sink all minor differences in view of the urgency of the political crisis.'[8]

> There was no vainglorious cheering; the general attitude was quiet and restrained. The rich crimson and purple and orange of the regalia; the red white and blue of the union jacks and bannerettes, and the music of the bands made an effective outward contribution to the trappings of the occasion, but behind the pageantry lay a demeanour of **Grim Earnestness and Determination,** and an all pervading sense of responsibility that testified to the unconquerable spirit animating every member of the immense throng.'[9] [Original emphasis.]

The Craigavon meeting had been a definite success in terms of mobilising the Ulster Unionist rank and file and stiffening their resolve - and it had been reported fulsomely in the London press.[10] However, when reading 'Craigavon' a palpable sense of dissatisfaction emerges with the parochialism of Belfast, and the necessarily limited audience that the city could provide. Unhappy with merely confirming each others convictions, the Ulstermen needed to influence England. Here the Craigavon document becomes revealing as it prescribes a course of action that would go on to make a profound effect upon ordinary British voters, for they wish that they, in England, could have seen the 'march past of the processionists', for

> if those [British] electors could have been transported to Craigavon, or, better still, if such a march past could be arranged in some populous centre in England, what effect would it have upon the political situation? Is it conceivable that such an impressive sight could fail to open the eyes of the British people, or that section of them who are still wilfully or ignorantly blind to facts of the case?[11]

We will discuss the answer to this question later. For now, it is enough to report with fascination that this is precisely what subsequently happened, as several 'march-pasts' were successfully held in populous centres in England, Scotland, and Wales, some of them even larger than those that took place in Belfast. Yet any demonstration against Home Rule, in Britain, would still have been enormously valuable - as the Ulster

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[7] 'Lesson of Craigavon', p. 8
[8] Ibid., p. 6
[9] Ibid., p. 9
[10] See for example the *Times*, 25 September 1911
[11] 'Lesson of Craigavon', p. 9

Unionist leadership seemed to recognise: 'how much more powerful as an agency for good would such a display, even on a smaller scale, be if witnessed in England?'[12] Simple expediency forced them to do this.

As Lord Dunleath remarked in a valedictory letter written to Carson in 1915: 'Speeches in and out of Parliament and monster demonstrations *in Ulster* [my emphasis] had apparently failed to interest the English and Scotch electors', it had been the duty of those 'possessed of influence' to 'take some step which would convince the government of the reality of our determination to resist this policy by every means in our power, and at the same time to attract to Ulster the attention of the masses in England and Scotland.'[13] Here Dunleath was talking about the formation of the UVF, but protest meetings across the Irish Sea were perhaps just as important as a propaganda tactic. In this respect an historian of the links between Ulster and Scotland is correct to highlight the way in which the 'tactic of appealing in a dramatic manner to British opinion was a consistent feature of their campaign in all the Home Rule crises.'[14] Whilst this is so, we have yet seriously to explore the implementation of the lessons of Craigavon on the streets of Great Britain.

There also exists a document produced by the Unionist Chairman, Arthur Steel-Maitland, which explored the possibility of exporting the personnel involved at Craigavon over to Britain. The Unionist leadership believed that a strenuous autumn campaign was required, and Steel-Maitland wrote that

> I have in mind the possibility of a really great demonstration in London, preceded by demonstrations elsewhere by men from Ulster. But for such a demonstration to be of any use, we should need to bring a minimum of some 20,000 men, converging through: -
>
> (a) Glasgow and Scotland coming south through Newcastle, the West Riding and eastern counties – 10,000
> (b) Liverpool and Lancashire – 5,000
> (c) S. Wales and the Bristol area[15]

However this tantalising project never came to fruition with Steel-Maitland concluding wistfully that although 'public opinion will need a great deal of rousing by ordinary methods' the prohibitive cost of transporting thousands of Ulstermen across the Irish Sea 'would probably be too immense.'[16] Indeed, the Unionists would have to wait till the following summer for anything of the order that the Party chairman had had in mind. The Party had to rely upon the so called 'ordinary methods' – small to medium scale meetings - to alert and alarm the nation. Although England and Scotland were more responsive to the rhythms of the Orange drum than some pessimistic Unionists

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[12] Ibid., p. 16
[13] Letter from Lord Dunleath to Sir Edward Carson, 9 March 1915. PRONI/D/1507/A/11/17
[14] Graham Walker, *Intimate Strangers*, p. 37
[15] 'Need for an Autumn Campaign', Steel-Maitland Papers, NAS/GD/193/80/5/43
[16] Ibid.

appreciated, it is beyond doubt that the Unionist speakers swiftly realised that the Irish question was not exercising British public opinion to a very great extent in 1911.

The sporadic anti-Home Rule meetings that took place in 1911, were usually low key affairs like those addressed by James Craig at Bellshill, Bannockburn, Oldham, Camberwell, and Hemel Hempstead; Croydon (where Carson was the star turn); or the meetings at Hartlepool, and Heywood where Lord Londonderry spoke (though 'the proceedings [there] were very quiet, and there were few indications of enthusiasm').[17] Craig and Londonderry were hardly in the Carson or F. E. Smith class of public speakers; nevertheless, the apathy they encountered irritated leading Ulster Unionists who struggled to comprehend the apathy they encountered outside of Ireland. In a classically conservative fulmination Carson wrote privately that the reason for this was that 'people are too well off and fond of pleasure to care about anything except amusing themselves.'[18] A conclusion echoed by Arthur Samuels, the Irish Solicitor-General, who complained that 'it is necessary to awake the British people out of their deplorable indifference. They think more of a cricket match than their constitution.'[19]

Many of Carson's correspondents were pessimistic, yet still believed in the potential of concerted persuasion. He reported this to his close confidante, the formidable Theresa, 6th Marchioness of Londonderry (the leading Tory hostess of the age: her vitality moved one contemporary to compare her to a 'highwaywoman in a tiara').[20] 'I get hundreds of letters from men only begging for strong action', Carson observed, '– so I hope we may be allowed to do something without cold douches every morning.'[21] To be sure, the Craigavon rally went a great way to announcing Ulster's defiance to the world, something which the Ulster Unionists were relying on, '[t]he agency of the press will bring our activities to the attention of England and it is confidently hoped that it will do much to enlighten public opinion on the most momentous question of the hour so far as Ireland is concerned' – noted the authors of 'Craigavon'.[22] Yet it remained the case that such demonstrations would be more effective away from Ireland: after all - aside from the Nationalists - who was there left to convince in Belfast?

Across the Irish Sea, British Unionists felt just as stymied. The two electoral defeats in the previous year had been narrow, but nonetheless frustrating for a Party accustomed to government. Home Rule had been seldom mentioned in those 1910 elections, at least by the Liberals, but there was now a sense within the Party that the question of Union will inevitably take centre stage, to their undoubted advantage. Percy Woodhouse, the secretary of the Lancashire Unionist Association, wrote to Lord Derby in July of 1911

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[17] *Glasgow Herald*, 6 October 1911; *The Scotsman*, 4 November 1911; *Oldham Standard*, 8 November 1911; *Times*, 17 November 1911; *Watford and West Hertfordshire Observer*, 18 November 1911; *Times*, 9 December 1911; *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 2 December 1911; *Heywood Advertiser*, 25 November 1911.
[18] Letter from Sir Edward Carson to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 3 June 1911. PRONI, D/2846/1/1/62
[19] Letter from Arthur Samuels to Sir Edward Carson, 24 July 1911. PRONI, D/1507/A/3/3
[20] E. F. Benson cited in Brian Masters, *Wynyard Park* (Billingham: The Marquess of Londonderry, 1973), p. 58
[21] Letter from Sir Edward Carson to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 27 August 1911. PRONI, D/2846/1/1/68
[22] 'Craigavon', p. 16

that '[w]e shall probably have some fire-eaters sulking but they will soon get over that, when the Government have to table their Home Rule and other bills, which are certain to be open to destructive criticism.'[23] Another Unionist urged a policy of 'violent muscular obstruction' to Steel-Maitland, arguing that 'that spirit would just capture the constituencies.'[24] This would at last get the Unionists onto the front foot, for it does appear that the otherwise latent pro-Union sentiment in Britain was showing some tentative signs of resurrection.

In a rallying speech to supporters in Portrush (just days after Craigavon) Carson told his supporters, who would undoubtedly have been anxious about public opinion across the water, that if the government sent troops to Ulster then 'I venture to think that a fire would burn throughout England that would not only displace the government, but would within a few days lead to the repeal of the iniquitous measure that could produce such disastrous results.' Obviously we should be wary of accepting this at face value - he hardly would have told them that 'England' was indifferent to their fate - but there are reasons to believe that British support although fickle, was not a lost cause, and that it simply needed determined, and unremitting arousal. As Carson went on to say

> I have been inundated with telegrams, not merely from this country, but from England ... Thousands are burning to come and help us. I have never gone down to a single platform almost in England where I have put this question fair and square that I was not inundated ... with such assurances as "Don't be afraid. We will come and help you whenever we are wanted."[25]

Perhaps Carson was right; perhaps the instinctive patriotic, and Protestant, impulse was stirring again. Indeed, in December of 1911 he was reporting to Lady Londonderry that his recent speaking engagements in Scotland had been 'very successful but hard work.'[26] For it should be borne in mind how commonplace was the interface between religion and politics, and its centrality in rousing support for Ulster. Indeed, from the late 1890s onwards parliament and press had devoted much attention to the thorny issue of ritualism in the Church of England - those so called 'Romish practices' that caused so much consternation among hard-line evangelical Protestants. What is more, these anti-ritualist speeches and writings 'inevitably contained frequent and pointed aspersions on Roman Catholicism; and these naturally aroused Catholic hostility.'[27] The church discipline bill was still being debated as late as 1909, and in the following year an arcane religious issue had briefly assumed centre stage that precisely encapsulated the sectarian dynamic that was indicative of the long-nineteenth century in British politics and society.

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[23] Letter from Percy Woodhouse to the Earl of Derby, 23 July 1911 LRO, 920 DER (17) 17/1

[24] Letter from Moreton Frewen to Arthur Steel-Maitland, 25 September 1911 NAS, GD/193/153/6/47

[25] This speech appears in 'Craigavon' (p. 52) evidence, perhaps, of the belief among Ulster Unionists that British public opinion really was amenable to their cause. See also the *Times*, 27 September 1911

[26] Letter from Sir Edward Carson to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 18 December 1911 PRONI, D/2846/1/1/76

[27] G. I. T. Machin, 'The last Victorian anti-ritualist campaign, 1895-1906', *Victorian Studies*, 25:3 (1982), p. 294

In 1910 a furore had broken out over changes to the Declaration of the Accession of the new King, namely the removal of those parts which referred to the Mass and the Virgin Mary as being 'superstitious and idolatrous.'[28] George V, mindful of the great offence that this caused his Roman Catholic subjects, had indicated that he would not open Parliament until the Declaration had been amended; and an amending Bill was duly presented to Parliament. The Unionist Chief Whip at the time, Lord Balcarres, described in revealing detail the political implications that this possessed

> Trouble is brewing about the Declaration Bill. Scotland is apparently up in arms. Nonconformists in the H. of C. who don't care a fig about the Roman Catholics are furious at the idea that the King shall pronounce himself a member of the C. of E. Ulster is of course rampaging. All the Protestant societies are preparing for the fray, and doubtless members are getting anxious about the future. [The Marquess of] Tullibardine [MP for Perthshire and heir to Duke of Atholl] had nearly 500 letters and postcards in the course of one day. This is the kind of problem which is far-reaching in results and I notice that a lot of our new men fail to realise how seriously the matter is from an ordinary electoral aspect.[29]

Balcarres concluded this diary entry with a remark that is absolutely fundamental to our understanding of the reaction of a large strand of British public opinion over the forthcoming Home Rule crisis, '[p]eople fancy we are no longer animated by the old No-Popery cry, and that our old-fashioned bigotry is dead. No greater mistake: it is merely dormant.'[30]

Dormant but beginning to stir, as another Unionist MP, Robert Sanders, noted in his diary: '[t]he No-Popery drum is being beaten very hard ... very lucky that the Liberal Party has to make the alteration.'[31] When the London Council of the United Protestant Societies, representing 50 national and provincial branches, convened to consider the subject they announced to the press that 'there was widespread feeling in favour of maintaining the Declaration unaltered and '1½ million adult signatures [had] been obtained in a short time to petitions to that effect to the House of Commons', and that the public should be reminded that the Declaration in its present form became law because, as it is plainly stated in the Bill of Rights, 'it hath been found by experience that it is inconsistent with the safety and welfare of this Protestant kingdom to be governed by a Popish Prince or by a King or Queen marrying a Papist.'[32] In the January elections at Liverpool, supporters of the soon to be victorious Conservative candidate for Kirkdale sang the following refrain

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[28] This proved to be a headache for the established church, see G. K. A. Bell, *Randall Davidson Archbishop of Canterbury* (London, 1935), pp. 612-17

[29] John Vincent, ed., *The Crawford Papers: The journals of David Lindsay, 27th Earl of Crawford and 10th Earl of Balcarres 1871-1940, during the years 1892 to 1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 162. Lindsay's family was heavily involved with the Orange Order in Wigan and Chorley, see Pugh, *Tories and the People*, p. 85

[30] Ibid.

[31] John Ramsden, ed., *Real old Tory Politics: The political Diaries of Sir Robert Sanders, Lord Bayford, 1910-1935* (London: The Historian's Press, 1984), p. 76

[32] *Times*, 14 May 1910

Vote for Kyffin-Taylor;
Let the Oath remain,
Keep the Empire Protestant:
We don't want Rome again![33]

In July of that year, at a crowded meeting in the Free Trade Hall, the Bishop of Manchester put it that the Declaration 'was a real bulwark against the horror of religious and civil war', and as such should be left unaltered.[34] In the West End of London 'five hundred sandwich[board]men' (employed by the Church Association) marched through the streets, the uncompromising message on their placards reminding us that the past is indeed a foreign country:

Protestants, - Do you want Popery on the Throne?
If not, oppose the Declaration Bill.
Electors, - write to-day to your M.P. and to Mr Asquith to protest against any alteration being made at the bidding of the Roman Catholics.
No Popery![35]

There is evidence that this may have been a national phenomenon, as John Forshaw, a Unionist apparatchik from Preston, wrote to Lord Derby complaining of the 'slanders that were promulgated in the press and on the walls and sandwich boards about the votes of our members on the coronation oath [which] did us much harm with a good many Catholics.'[36] Preston, a centre of Recusancy since the Reformation, had an unusually high concentration of English Roman Catholics, and in the late nineteenth century they expressed their disquiet whenever 'the [Conservative] Party's protestant tail [wagged] the dog.'[37] It is apposite therefore that in the aftermath of the January elections of 1910 the *Lancashire Daily Post* tersely observed that the Preston Unionists owed their victory 'mainly to the religious question'.[38] Elsewhere there was plenty of pressure from hardliners: prior to the December elections of that year, the Protestant Alliance issued a manifesto firstly urging electors to support candidates 'whose Protestantism was above reproach', and secondly to remind them that 'the predominating question is: who is to rule Britain, King or Pope?'[39] And King George V's subjects remained alive to any Catholic intrusions or improprieties. In 1913, following complaints from the 'Protestant Reform Society' over the Admiralty's provision of a ship to convey the Papal Legate, Cardinal Ferrata, from Sicily to Malta for a Eucharistic Conference, King, Prime Minister, and First Lord of the Admiralty, began an earnest and prolonged correspondence over the supposed gross irregularity of the episode.[40]

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[33] Sir Charles Petrie, *The Victorians* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1960), p. 97
[34] *Times*, 26 July 1910
[35] *Times*, 27 July 1910
[36] Letter from John Forshaw to the Earl of Derby, 7 Dec 1910 LRO/920 DER (17) 17/1
[37] Pugh, *Tories and the People*, p. 125
[38] *Lancashire Daily Post*, 18 January 1910
[39] *Times*, 18 November 1910
[40] See letters from Herbert Asquith to Winston Churchill, 8 April 1913. CCC, CHAR 13/19/68; from Winston Churchill to Admiral Sir Berkeley Milne [Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean], 11 April 1913.

These were archaic questions, yet they remind us of the important position that anti-Catholicism still held in the matrix of British national identity. Nevertheless, James Loughlin has argued that by 1910 a new class of Unionist had emerged, unconcerned with such antiquated quarrels, and that opposition to the Declaration Bill was too narrow to be of much consequence - confined, as he claims, to Liverpool, remote parts of Nonconformist Cornwall, and of course, Ulster.[41] The diminished significance of such issues is undoubtedly true, however this strand of public opinion remained influential, and gives us a valuable indicator of the resilience of British prejudices; and *ipso facto* the likely reaction of the British public to a campaign against Irish Home Rule, which was, in many respects, couched in language that could have been penned by the Protestant Alliance. This undoubtedly annoyed moderate opinion, with journalists like F. S. Oliver writing to Unionist Chairman Arthur Steel-Maitland to 'urge your tom fool followers to keep off two things – religious intolerance and treason.'[42] The former being indulged in with some relish.

It is correct to say that, in the five years after 1906, Home Rule was not at the forefront of public consciousness. But this was inevitable, considering that the Home Rule Bill was not presented to parliament until 1912 – and the 'Sir Edward Carson Unionist Defence Fund', established to finance anti-Home Rule propaganda in Britain, was not established until the January of that year. Furthermore, and this is crucial, Patrick Buckland has reminded us in his exhaustive study of Ulster Unionism to 1922, that it is not until the period between 1911 and 1914 that the propaganda work of the Unionist Association of Ireland (UAI) 'is seen at its best.'[43]

The UAI campaign in Britain busied itself with four main areas of activity: the organisation of anti-Home Rule demonstrations; canvassing of doubtful electors; the supervision of workingmen's tours of Ireland; and the production and distribution of enormous quantities of propaganda literature. Booklets, pamphlets, and leaflets reveal a deliberate strategy on the part of the Irish Unionists to play on that strand of British nationalism and religious chauvinism that looked askance at Catholic Ireland. This instinct was not necessarily the exclusive preserve of one particular Party - of course Liberals were less likely to be moved by such appeals but they certainly were not a lost cause. As Buckland has argued, this tactic hoped to 'create a revulsion of feeling from the Liberals by emphasising the persecution suffered by loyal, decent, honest men in Ireland, the religious or 'racial' identity of the loyal minority being stressed to suit personal taste and audience.'[44]

The work of the UAI was also shadowed successfully by the Ulster Women's Unionist Council. Formed in January 1911, the UWUC soon became the largest female political

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CUA, CHAR 13/22A/19-20; from Lord Stamfordham [Private Secretary to King George V] to Edward Marsh [Private Secretary to Winston Churchill], 29 April 1913 CUA, CHAR 13/19/88

[41] Loughlin, *Unionism and British National Identity*, pp. 57-59

[42] Letter from F. S. Oliver to Arthur Steel-Maitland, 15 Oct 1911. NAS GD/193/154/5/51

[43] Patrick Buckland, *Irish Unionism: 2 Ulster Unionism and the Origins of Northern Ireland, 1886-1922* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1972), p. 73

[44] Ibid., p. 71

group Ireland had ever seen.[45] One of their main roles was to recruit and despatch speakers and canvassers across the Irish Sea, and had been receiving requests 'from Women's Unionist Clubs in England and Scotland asking for Speakers and literature' from early 1911.[46] This was a formidable organisation, and their minutes reveal that they 'were most anxious to address Radical audiences rather than meetings of convinced Unionists'; and a hard core of 56 female 'unionist missionaries' did valuable work promoting Ulster's cause.[47] Indeed, they considered themselves so efficient that they expressed frustration to each other in private correspondence about masculine ineptitude, as, they believed, that their husbands had in many cases had actually done more harm than good to their cause among the British public. In a letter to Lady Londonderry (one of the chief patrons of the organisation) a Mrs Sinclair referred to 'the delicate matter' of the failure of their menfolk

> [W]e may be referred to "the men" as the fountain of all wisdom and this is exactly where the men have failed. [Sic.] Huge expenditure has resulted in very little "education of the British voter" and many speakers sent over have been a perfect terror wherever they go!!! [48]

This suggests that the UWUC realised the seriousness of the situation and that they believed that the hitherto lacklustre campaign of the UAI in Britain was jeopardising the Ulster cause. It seems that they appreciated, as did many of their colleagues in Ulster, that although their P.R. work had been disappointing thus far, this did not mean that the British voter could not be persuaded of, what they saw as, the justice of Ulster's cause. They recognised that the sectarian inclinations of the British public could be exploited for the benefit of their cause, as Mrs Sinclair made the point to Lady Londonderry in late 1911. 'The latest Papal decree [presumably *Motu Proprio*, which condemned marriages between Catholics and Protestants as invalid][49] is creating considerable concern here', she explained, 'and I think the more it is known in England and Scotland the better for our cause.'[50]

Sinclair urged her co-workers that they should set the agenda. 'The idea of waiting till they are invited should not be entertained' she argued (but if an invitation is received it would still be considered[51]), but, they must face facts '[t]here is far too much apathy in

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[45] Diane Urquhart, ed., *The Minutes of the Ulster Women's Unionist Council and Executive Committee, 1911-1940* (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 2001), p. xi; *idem.*, "The female of the species is more deadly than the male'?: The Ulster Women's Unionist Council, 1911-1940', Janice Holmes and Diane Urquhart, eds, *Coming into the Light: The Work, Politics, and Religion of Women in Ulster, 1840-1940* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, 1994), pp. 99-123

[46] Letter from S. A. Finlay to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 24 Feb, 1911. DRO, D/Lo/C/686(27)(i)

[47] UWUC Active Workers' Committee Minutes, 15 November 1912 (PRONI, D/2688/1/3); Urquhart, *Minutes*, p. xvi

[48] Letter from Mrs Sinclair to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 7 March 1911. DRO, D/Lo/C/686(33)(i)

[49] Sinclair had claimed earlier that '10,000 women in Edinburgh' were banded together in protest at this same decree. See Conference of UWUC branch Secretaries 22 Sep 1911 DRO, D/Lo/C/686(58)(i)

[50] Letter from Mrs Sinclair to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 29 Dec 1911 DRO, D/Lo/C/686(84)(i)

[51] A request for a speaker was received from Nottingham which was agreed. Meeting of the UWUC executive committee: 25 Sep 1911. DRO/D/Lo/C/686(59)(i)

Great Britain to warrant us in expecting invitations.'[52] Sinclair then made the point that their 'missionary work' should be carefully organised so as to target the 'hopeful parts' of England and Scotland, as she believed '[i]t is a waste of power to link up with either a hopeless constituency or a safe constituency; in other words, in a constituency in which there is not some chance of gaining something ...'[53] Therefore, the ladies were sent out to support the Unionist candidate at the Haddington by-election in Scotland, and to canvass in Gloucester for a week, and Cambridgeshire for a month.[54]

Just like their male counterparts, the UWUC realised that the agency of the press was essential to the success of their enterprise. At a meeting of the Women's Council in Belfast, a Miss Graham-Hope volunteered to 'communicate with various Unionist Newspapers in England' and offer them 'information as to the work of the UWUC from the secretary of the Council', and they were heartened by the news that apparently the editor of the *Daily Express* had expressed a keen interest in the work of the Council.[55] The dissemination of propaganda was something of a forte for these ladies; in point of fact they performed a useful ancillary role for the Ulster Unionist Council. When the UUC received information about Home Rule supporters in England they would then pass on their details to the women who would in turn send these people Unionist literature.[56] And it is this literature, containing as it does a sales-pitch that the Irish Unionists believed was the most likely to sway the British public, that we can discover so much about Edwardian Britain.

Consider a pamphlet entitled 'Religious Liberty under Home Rule', published in 1912 by the UAI and distributed throughout Britain. It is an interesting document, because in it the author made a clever pitch for both the sympathies of the John Bull type Protestant and the Liberal progressive who had a distinct mistrust of established religion, and indeed of clericalism of any stamp. 'It is often urged that the fear of domination by the Roman Catholic Church under Home Rule is a mere bogey; that there is complete religious liberty in France, and that there would be the same in Ireland.' Not so, it argues, in a manner calculated to appeal to all stripes of political opinion in Britain: 'The answer is that the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland is not merely a religious, but also a great political institution. Its ideas of religious liberty are not those of modern times, but of the Middle Ages.'[57]There then followed some pretty blatant scare-mongering aimed squarely at British Protestant sentiment. Apparently, when the Home Rule Act had passed through the House of Commons, a Professor Nolan from the Seminary at Maynooth had proclaimed gleefully that 'we shall have a free hand in the future. Let us use it well. This is as Catholic country, and if we do not govern it on Catholic lines, according to Catholic ideals and Catholic interests, it will be all the worse for the country and all the worse for us.' It must be said that the Catholic Church was not exactly known for their tact in this period, and they did little to assuage Protestant fears over the religious implications of a

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[52] Letter from Mrs Sinclair to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 11 March 1911. DRO, D/Lo/C/686(35)(i)
[53] Letter from Mrs Sinclair to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 20 March 1911. DRO, D/Lo/C/686(39)(i)
[54] Ulster Women's Unionist Council. Annual Report for 1911. DRO, D/Lo/C/686(320)(ii)
[55] Minutes of a meeting of the UWUC: 8 Sep 1911. DRO, D/Lo/C/686(56)(i)
[56] Ulster Women's Unionist Council. Annual Report for 1911. DRO, D/Lo/C/686(320)(ii)
[57] 'Religious Liberty under Home Rule' [no page numbers] PRONI, D/989/C/1/23

Dublin Parliament. Any Catholic triumphalism was zeroed in on by the Unionist propaganda machine, and they regularly unearthed and disseminated unfortunate statements like the following vituperation that appeared in the Irish organ *Catholic Progress*

> The woes of Ireland are due to one single cause – the existence of Protestantism in Ireland. The remedy could only be found in the removal of that which caused the evil ... Until Ireland is governed as a Roman Catholic nation, and all scope given to the development of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland by appropriating to the Roman Catholic Church the funds given to religion, a recurrence of such events as our now taking place cannot be prevented. Would that every Protestant meeting-house were swept from the land; then would Ireland recover herself, and outrages would be unknown, for there would be no admixture of unbelievers with her champions.[58]

Indeed, a later document, published by the Union Defence League, would ask 'whether those who are referred to in so opprobrious a manner, are likely to receive respect and toleration from the congregations listening to these clerical utterances.'[59] The more this argument was disseminated in Britain, so they believed, the better it was for Ulster's cause.

The thoroughness of the UAI's operation in Britain is vividly illustrated by the contents page of the 'Irish Unionist Pocket Book'[60], which lists just about every conceivable question that could be asked of these Unionist missionaries about their opposition to Home Rule:

1. The Majority Argument
2. The Dollar Argument
3. The Ascendancy Argument
4. The Equality Argument
5. The Depopulation Argument
6. The Coercion Argument
7. The Diminution of Crime Argument
8. The Downtrodden Ireland Argument
9. The Ireland Poorer Argument
10. The Colonies Argument
11. The Home Rule all round Argument
12. The Guarantees and Safeguards Argument
13. The Ulster Bigotry Argument
14. The Sectarian Argument
15. The Finality Argument
16. The Unionists Weakening Argument

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[58] 'Religious Liberty under Home Rule'

[59] *The Home Rule Bill 1913: Memorandum on second reading June 1913* (Private and confidential UDL Memorandum) June 1913, p. 19. PRONI/D/1507/A/4/5

[60] *IRISH UNIONIST POCKET BOOK Containing radical questions and unionist answers regarding Home Rule: For the use of Unionist workers in Great Britain* (Dublin 1911). PRONI/D/989/C/1/11B

17. The Financial Argument
18. The Bad Treatment in the Past Argument
19. The Don't want to Know Argument
20. The Stay and Convert the People at Home Argument
21. The Irish Ideas Argument
22. The Ireland a Nation Argument
23. The Civil and Religious Liberty Argument
24. The Protestant Leader Argument
25. The Protestant Home Ruler Argument
26. The Religious Toleration Argument
27. The 'My Father was a Liberal' Argument
28. The Best Interests of Ireland Argument
29. The Something must be Done Argument

This is an important document as the arguments contained within it were heard by so many people. Between September 1911 and July 1914 the Irish Unionists organised 5,000 meetings, 1,246,225 voters were petitioned in England alone, and canvassing was undertaken in over 200 constituencies. In Scotland in the same period, 3,843 meetings were convened and 205,654 persons were solicited for their votes in 50 constituencies, some of which had been canvassed twice. Across Great Britain as a whole, the UAI distributed over six million booklets, leaflets and pamphlets.[61] From Wick to Worthing ordinary voters would have heard Unionist vindications like point 1. 'The Majority Argument' which argued that for 'every majority [to] get everything it wants is absurd; for what are you to do when there are two majorities whose wishes are so opposed to one another? ... No man should support Home Rule simply because an Irish majority wants it, since it concerns England and Scotland as well as Ireland.' Then it got to the nub, presenting a scenario that they obviously believed all right-thinking Britons would find intolerable

> To make this plainer, let any man ask himself whether he is prepared to grant everything that an Irish majority demands? Would he grant absolute separation? That has been demanded in the name of the majority ... Would he consent to make the Roman Catholic Church supreme? There is probably a larger Irish majority in favour of that than in favour of Home Rule.[62]

Even in a question like the above, which, ostensibly, had nothing to do with religion, sectarian dimensions emerge. Indeed, the word 'Catholic' clangs through this literature like a leper's bell. To be sure, the religious problem is addressed squarely in the *Irish Unionist Pocket Book*, as these canvassers were advised, when confronted with the 'Religious Toleration Argument' (point 26.) to recount a suitable story of Englishmen at first sceptical about the Ulstermen's fear of Catholic domination. In 1893, at the height of the last Home Rule crisis, 'a number of Gladstonian working-men went as a delegation from the North of England to Belfast for a few days.' One of this Party (a Mr S. J. Field of Scotswood-on-Tyne) 'publicly declared in Belfast that he disbelieved the Unionist

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[61] Buckland, *Irish Unionism*, p. 77
[62] *IRISH UNIONIST POCKET BOOK*, p. 7

declarations about priestly intolerance.' However when Field returned he was moved to write a disclaiming letter to the *Times*, an extract of which appears in the *Pocket Book*

> I little thought how soon I should have to eat my own words. The statements made by Unionists were proved up to the hilt ... I was not aware that the priest commanded the people of his flock under pain of excommunication to vote for particular candidates. To talk of intolerance and influence is a mild way of putting it. The will of the peasantry of Ireland means simply the priests.[63]

It is interesting that the Irish Unionists obviously took for granted that British public opinion would view the will of the priests as a bad thing. But perhaps they were right, and maybe these Ulster emissaries could achieve a remarkable feat: the mobilisation of natural Unionists and the conversion of men like that Tynesider, who, despite being a Liberal, had similar scruples on the Irish question as the staunchest Tory. As one historian has written, the roots of popular Protestantism drew from 'concerns as dear to the heart of many a Liberal workingman as they were to his Tory counterpart'.[64] And this was the reason why the Ulster Women's Unionist Council were so keen to establish firm links with the Women's Protestant Union as their members 'included wives of radicals and Non-conformists who all seemed most interested and ready to help', particularly in appealing to their husband's consciences.[65]

The religious complexion of Britain was complicated. After all, Liberalism and Non-conformity often went hand in hand, and had been traditionally hostile to the Unionists because of their close ties to the established Church. Yet there is some reason to believe that the appeal of Loyal Ulster could circumvent the fissures within British Protestantism, as Tom Sinclair argued in a letter to Bonar Law:

> I am sure you are aware that the great obstacle in our way in defeating H. R. lies in the attitude of English Non-Conformists ... nevertheless ... now that the H of L's [sic] question has been dealt with they may now be more willing to appeals from their non-episcopal brethren.[66]

1912

For many historians, the independence of the Ulster Unionists in this period has been seen as evidence of the decline in power of the Irish aristocracy and the growth of a Belfast business class increasingly alienated from the patrician leadership of the Edwardian Conservative Party.[67] Yet they have, perhaps, underestimated the fraternal

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[63] Ibid., p. 99. See the *Times*, 5 May 1894
[64] Joyce, *Work, Society, and Politics*, p. 251
[65] Urquhart, *Minutes*, p. 73
[66] Letter from T. Sinclair to Andrew Bonar Law, 21 November 1911. HLRO, Bonar Law Papers, 24/3/68
[67] Alvin Jackson, *The Ulster Party*, pp. 284-321; Thomas C. Kennedy, '"The Gravest situation of our lives": Conservatives, Ulster, and the Home Rule Crisis', *Eire-Ireland*, 36, 2 (2001); J. R. Archer, 'The Unionist Tradition in Ireland', *Eire-Ireland* 15:2 (Summer, 1980).

and familial bond between the peoples of the United Kingdom that existed before the Great War. Massive internal migration throughout the nineteenth century had meant that the English, Scots, Welsh, and Irish were no longer 'neatly confined within their own national territory, but were intermixed in complex ways', resulting in 'a more uniform United Kingdom.'[68] These demographic links were stiffened by a myriad of motifs that defined a truly British imperial imagery from sentimental Irish songs that were central to the repertoire of the music hall, to the skirl of the pipes at national festivities; where brawny English tars were supported by moustachioed Highlanders and regiments like the Irish Guards (a unit established, so it was said, in recognition of patriotic Irish valour in the Boer War). Furthermore, the ubiquity of 'jingo kitsch' that was reproduced on everything from cigarette packets to biscuit tins went some way to remind the peoples of the United Kingdom of their common heritage.[69]

Therefore, although they were often represented in caricature, the constituent nations of the kingdom were regularly adduced not to accentuate their independence or diminish the union, but to emphasise the strength of the national community. When we also append the common Protestantism of England, Wales, Scotland and the North East of Ireland (and its enduring importance), it is therefore arguable that it is in the late 1910s that we find unionism but not necessarily support for the Unionist Party at its strongest among the British public: and it was the strategy of the Ulster Unionists was to transform the former into the latter. In this sense we can understand more fully why, during the Boyne Celebrations of 1911, Belfast Orangemen displayed a passage from the Book of Ruth on their banner ('The Appeal of Ruth to the Moabite') which, in its invocations of creed, kindred and commitment, we find neatly encapsulated the strength of their appeal.

> Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for wither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodge, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.[70]

The estrangement of the upper echelons of the Conservative Party from their colleagues in Northern Ireland had begun during the first decade of the twentieth century. Under men like Edward Saunderson Ulster Unionism had become a 'maverick entity' that had 'little instinctive loyalty for British Party institutions.'[71] The famously refined Tory leader Arthur Balfour was 'actively repelled' by the uncouth and uncompromising 'radicals at Belfast.'[72] But the formation of the Ulster Unionist Council in 1904-5 was in many respects 'a rejection of the landlord-dominated and high-political focus of late

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[68] G. R. Searle, *A New England?*, p. 14; for a more general discussion of this point see pp. 7-18

[69] This point is explored thoroughly in J. M. Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984); Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (London: Verson, 1991)

[70] *Ruth* 1:16, see Stewart, *Ulster Crisis*, p. 46

[71] Alvin Jackson, *Colonel Edward Saunderson: Land and Loyalty in Victorian Englan*d (Oxford: OUP, 1995), p. 243

[72] Alvin Jackson, *The Ulster Party*, pp. 299-300 and 311;

Victorian Unionism.'[73] So although Balfour may have preferred to avoid Baronscourt and the Ulster Club this does not mean that other links between Britain and Ulster had not endured; quite the contrary, they were flourishing. For example, the great triangular axis that joined the Lagan, Clyde and Mersey together into one vast commercial zone was vital for British prosperity in this period, and just as important in their own way were the interactions between the North of Ireland and places like Barrow-in-Furness and the small ports along the Cumbrian coast (where the 'Orange vote' was significant)[74] as well as other industrial towns in the North of England that Belfast so resembled.

In January 1912 the Lord Mayor of Belfast, H. J. McMordie MP, came to Sunderland on a civic visit. Lauded by the local Unionists he was invited to speak at the town's Victoria Hall.[75] To an audience composed of industrial types that he would have recognised in his home city he claimed that, owing to his municipal position, 'he could not commit himself to any expression of opinion as to the present state of things in Belfast', however what he would say was that 'the situation in the city which he had just left was very grave indeed.'[76] Nevertheless, he became more voluble as the meeting progressed, imploring his guests by telling them that his message to England was '[w]e are doing well; for God's sake leave us alone.' He went on to refer to the shooting of a woman in the South of Ireland, declaring that 'there was nothing to equal it in southern Africa.' His closing remark - that the '[t]he terrorism had gone so far that neither of the [Liberal] members for Sunderland dare pass a resolution denouncing those murders. If they did they would have earned the Victoria Cross' - was greeted with laughter and cheers.[77]

The impression is thus gained that, as an active President of the Irish Industrial Development Association, McMordie would have felt more at home among the shipyards of Wearside than the drawing-rooms of Mayfair. And it is interesting to learn that on his next sojourn in England he visited another ship-building town, Hartlepool, where he told a large responsive audience that 'that disastrous as Home Rule would be for Ireland, it was fraught with even greater disaster for England.'[78]

Shipbuilding towns, with their reliance upon naval contracts, were often distinguished by their distinctly Tory leanings. Jingoism played well in the shipyards, which dovetailed with the distinctive religious character of such places, where, as one historian has reminded us, 'Protestantism was still significant.'[79] Indeed, by 1914 Unionist organisers could describe somewhere like Sunderland as a 'very important place', and, interestingly,

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[73] Alvin Jackson, 'Irish Unionism, 1870-1922', D. George Boyce, and Alan O'Day, eds, *Defenders of the Union: a survey of British and Irish Unionism, since 1801* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 120

[74] Pelling, *Social Geography*, p. 330; Donald M. MacRaild, *Culture, Conflict, and Migration: The Irish in Victorian Cumbria* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998), p. 28

[75] A number of historians have noted the formidable local Tory organisation that existed in Sunderland at this time, see Blewett, *Peers*, p. 198; Pelling, *Social Geography*, p. 325

[76] [Newcastle] *Evening Chronicle*, 26 January 1912

[77] [Newcastle] *Illustrated Chronicle*, 26 January 1912

[78] *Newcastle Journal*, 26 April 1912. McMordie had a family connection with Hartlepool: his wife Julia came from the town, see Diane Urquhart, *Women in Ulster Politics* (Dublin: Irish Academic, 2000), p. 88

[79] Duncan Tanner, *Political Change and the Labour Party, 1900-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge university Press, 1990), p. 235

'a likely win.'[80] Thanks to their industrial and religious profile, towns like Sunderland and Hartlepool were similar to Belfast, yet they also shared a common demographic link. The massive Irish migration to Britain that had occurred throughout the nineteenth century (and not just in the immediate famine period) brought hundreds of thousands of Irish people to the industrial towns of the North of England and elsewhere – challenging the host population in the labour market.[81] It has been a common misconception to assume that almost all of these migrants would have been Catholic; but, in fact, a significant number of them were Protestants from the North of Ireland.

The growth of maritime construction in the 1870s had brought about patterns of cyclical migration between the great shipbuilding centres - the Clyde, Belfast, Tyne and Wear, and Barrow in Furness[82] – and this had helped to establish an Irish Protestant presence across central Scotland and the North of England. What is more, these migrants gave a new lease of life to the Orange Order in England and Scotland, as it found a valuable new role as a mutual aid network, assisting the integration of Ulster migrants into British society by 'providing incoming Irish Protestants with a forum through which to express their identity, and in many cases to mix with native Protestants.'[83] And it is interesting to note that when McMordie was visiting Sunderland, there is evidence of Orangemen simultaneously gathering ten miles away in Hebburn, South Tyneside, to pledge support to the Ulster Unionists

> Bro. Nutt addressing the members said that it behoved every member of the order to attend his Lodge at this, the most critical time in the history of the Institution, in order to defeat that appalling disaster which would inevitably occur in the advent of Home Rule. The secretary was instructed to send a report to the *Belfast Weekly News* wishing every success to Sir Edward Carson and the Ulster Unionist Council in the determined stand against Home Rule.[84]

Indeed, thanks to the work of the Belfast press in broadcasting the work of Lodges across the water, toasts would be given at Orange dinners around the world, after the King and the armed forces, to 'the editor of the *Belfast Telegraph*.'[85]

The distribution of Irish migrants across the United Kingdom, and not just in entrepots like Liverpool and Glasgow is revealed in the decennial census. In 1901 the population of County Durham was 1,187,361, of which 22,496 had been born in Ireland - almost two

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[80] Letter from Arthur Steel Maitland to Andrew Bonar Law, 22 January 1914. HLRO, BL/31/2/53
[81] E. D. Steele, 'The Irish Presence in the North of England, 1850-1914', *Northern History*, 12 (1976), p.241
[82] S. Pollard, and P. Robertson, *The British Shipbuilding Industry, 1870-1914* (Cambridge, Mass. And London, 1979), p. 163
[83] Donald M. MacRaild, *Irish Migrants*, p. 109
[84]LOL 812 'James Gibson Memorial Temperance Lodge', minutes, 27 January 1912. I am grateful to Professor Don MacRaild for this information.
[85] From the 1890s we read that lodges were instructing their secretaries to send lodge reports to the *Belfast Weekly News.* See, for example, LOL 387 'Tantobie', minutes, 6 March 1897.

per cent.[86] This calculation is necessarily crude and does not reflect the true size of the 'Irish' cadre in the county (i.e. those born to Irish parents or of distinctly Irish heritage), and neither does it tell us anything about religious affiliation (though we can presume that most, but certainly not all, Irish migrants were Catholic). Furthermore, there were 27,489 persons residing in County Durham who had been born in Scotland, many of whom would also have been of Irish heritage as there were well-established migration streams that took in Clydeside, Tayside, Edinburgh, and the area of North East England that comprises the modern county of Tyne and Wear. The populations of Sunderland and Hartlepool in 1901 reflected these trends. Out of Sunderland's population of 146,077, 2,001 had been born in Ireland and 3,982 in Scotland. Similarly, of the 62,627 residents of Hartlepool, 1,325 had been born in Ireland, 1,788 in Scotland.[87] In Newcastle, the largest city in the region, in 1911, 1.5 per cent of the 250,825 who lived in the city had been born in Ireland, and 4.5 per cent in Scotland (falling from high points in 1851 of 8 per cent and 6.5 per cent respectively).[88]

This Irish Diaspora would have important implications for the Edwardian Home Rule Crisis. Firstly, the introduction of large numbers of Irish Catholics into British cities often led to ethno-sectarian friction, which influenced native reaction to the Irish question; but secondly (and this is often overlooked) the foundation, in England and Scotland, of a Protestant Irish community had planted steadfast sympathisers into the heart of the British body politic. This meant therefore that, for example, in late 1911 the Women's Ulster Unionist Council could instruct their secretary to 'write to a number of English and Scotch papers appealing to Irish Women in England and Scotland to communicate with him and assist the work of the council',[89] as there was plenty of women in Britain who had such ancestry. But perhaps even more importantly the thriving Orange Order could play an important role in publicising Ulster's cause and influencing their neighbours and colleagues.

Ever since the late nineteenth century the Orangemen had undertaken the responsibility to unite 'Tory Unionists and working-class voters against the fiercely contested Home Rule issue', and they achieved this because the 'Orangemen in the north of England at this time combined Anglo-Saxonist and anti-Home-Rule rhetoric to articulate the otherwise inchoate values of native and Irish working class Protestants.'[90] Thus, as early as January 1912 we have the press reporting that 'Loyal Orange Lodge No. 371' of Newcastle upon Tyne had minuted their interest and concern in the Home Rule question and expressing 'its confidence in our worthy leader, Sir Edward Carson, and that we approve all his actions up to the present, and wish him success in the future.'[91] And in Liverpool Robert Houston MP informed the West Toxteth Orangemen that 'Protestantism and Patriotism

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[86] *Census of England and Wales 1901: County of Durham. Area, Houses and Population; also population classified by ages, condition as to marriage, occupations, birthplaces and infirmities* (London: HMSO, 1902), p. 78

[87] Ibid.

[88] Mike Barke, 'The People of Newcastle: A Demographic History', Robert Colls and Bill Lancaster, eds, *Newcastle upon Tyne: A Modern History* (Chichester: Phillimore, 2001), p. 156

[89] The minutes of the meeting of the UWUC: 8th Sep 1911. DRO/D/Lo/C/686(56)(i)

[90] MacRaild, *Irish Migrants*, p. 118

[91] [Newcastle] *Evening Chronicle*, 25 January 1912

were the two great elements of the strength of the nation', and that they must affirm their implacable opposition: 'to their co-religionists being placed under the rule of their hereditary enemies, alien to them in blood and religion.'[92]

Therefore, alongside the broader Unionist constituency, there existed pockets of intense fellow feeling for the Loyalists of Ulster. What is more, the parts of Britain that had the largest proportion of Irish also tended to be areas that had been historically sympathetic to the Unionists.[93] Therefore it was inevitable that the Unionists should decide to mobilise their core vote, and they attempted this with an impressive programme of over 40 meetings in the crucial battleground of the North West. The *Times* announced that the meetings were organised as 'a protest against Home Rule', and they expected that 'about 80,000 people will be addressed', the largest meetings to be held in Liverpool, Manchester, Bury, Preston, Warrington, St Helens and New Brighton.[94] The visceral sectarian geography of that county was so immediate that Home Rule was an issue that struck a chord with Lancashire audiences, and, as a consequence, the Unionist speakers could be sure to draw large crowds. 'Reports received from the 25 towns in which the meetings were held on Monday agree that the keenest interest was taken in the campaign', claimed the *Times*, and 'although in each centre the largest available hall has been taken, in nine out of ten instances the halls were incapable of holding the crowds who sought admission.'[95] Indeed, in Preston, over 5,000 people turned out to hear Walter Long denounce plans for Irish self-government.[96] Buoyed by Lancastrian enthusiasm he wrote to Lady Londonderry that night that to inform her that 'we have had a whole series of first rate meetings, very enthusiastic and determined. I think the people of these parts are all prepared to back up Ulster.'[97] Carson knew he needed this to be true, so he began his speaking engagements for 1912 in the two most important and influential cities in the North of England: Liverpool and Manchester.

Judging by Carson's flattering remarks to a large audience in Liverpool's Sun Hall, he appreciated the importance of ensuring that Ulster's base support was on side. His close friend and colleague F. E. Smith, on his home patch, warmed up the crowd by reminding them that nothing stood 'between Ulster and ruin, but her own determination, and your [Liverpool's] brotherly support.' Then, addressing himself to the city itself and not to the wider British public (as represented by the emissaries of Fleet Street), as was customary at these meetings, Carson announced to rousing cheers that 'Liverpool has always been true to Loyal Ireland', and 'there has never been a moment in our history in which we claim, and claim with more gratitude, than at the present moment the loyalty of Liverpool towards my country' (more cheers). And he concluded, amidst more ovations, that 'we

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[92] *Liverpool Daily Post and Mercury*, 24 January 1912
[93] J. P. D. Dunbabin, 'British elections', p. 251; Neal Blewett, *Peers ,Parties, and People*, p. 411
[94] *Times*, 2 January 1912
[95] *Times*, 24 January 1912. Meetings took place in Altrincham, Birkenhead, Dukinfield, Frodsham, Great Harwood, Hindley, Knutsford, Little Lever, Manchester, Morecambe, New Brighton, Ormskirk, Pemberton, Radcliffe, Swinton, Ulverston, Warrington, Whitworth, Wilmslow, Winsford, and Wigan.
[96] *Lancashire Daily Post*, 23 January 1912
[97] Letter from Walter Long to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 23 January 1912. PRONI/D/2846/1/4/1

Irishmen will see this matter through (cheers), and you Liverpool men will be behind us all the time, and you will take care that we will get fair play (cheers).[98]

It seems that the strain of maintaining the union was already beginning to tell on Carson. Lord Castlereagh (heir to the Marquess of Londonderry) reported to his mother that he had heard that Carson had 'broke down at Liverpool and the whole audience stood up and cheered.'[99] These being the days of extempore hour-long perorations, it would undoubtedly have taken it out of anyone, particularly Carson, who still practiced as a barrister.

The following evening he was in Manchester, where the *Times* reported that he 'had an enthusiastic reception on ascending the Free Trade Hall platform', with the audience singing 'For he's a jolly good fellow.'[100] Carson again began by paying tribute to his audience, proclaiming that his reception in Manchester 'made me imagine almost that I was in the Ulster Hall in Belfast' (remarkable considering the city's profile as a Liberal citadel) before delivering a lengthy speech heavy on prompts for audience participation. He denounced Winston Churchill's proposed meeting in the Ulster Hall (where he would repudiate his father's 1886 declaration that 'Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right') by saying that 'the most provocative speaker in the whole Party, is going under the most provocative circumstances to a place where the words of his own father are still ringing in the ear.' This was greeted with loud cheers, and, working the audience like the lawyer he was, went on to provoke the gallery into voicing their disapprobation, by subtly invoking the ghost of Lundy, the infamous Ulsterman who had advised at the siege of Derry that the town surrender to the Jacobite army: 'May I say this, rightly or wrongly, and it is for historical reasons' he began, 'there is nothing that the men of the North of Ireland hate more than a turncoat (renewed cheers), whoever it may be – T. W. Russell (groans) or Winston Churchill (groans).'[101]

Public meetings in Edwardian Britain were an important yardstick for the assessment of public opinion, and the *Times* paid serious attention to the protocols involved; declaring of the Lancashire and Cheshire meetings that in 'only one instance was there failure to carry a resolution declaring hostility to the policy of Home Rule.'[102] The 'No Surrender' line was effective in appealing to the Unionists' core support and these meetings in the North West were meant as a means of grabbing the public's attention before Bonar Law's inaugural speech as leader at the Albert Hall, where he reiterated this uncompromising stance that 'we mean to support to the end, the loyal minority in Ireland', and Carson had announced gravely that he was there to tell them 'solemnly and honestly that we will see this matter through. The costs may be great the sufferings may be terrible.'[103]

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[98] *Liverpool Courier*, 23 January 1912
[99] Letter from Viscount Castlereagh to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 25 January 1912. PRONI/D/2846/1/12/2
[100] *Times*, 24 January 1912
[101] *Manchester Courier*, 24 January 1912
[102] *Times*, 24 January 1912
[103] *Times*, 27 January 1912

The British Unionists might well have felt more confident after the success of their tour of Lancashire, perhaps it may have even stiffened their resolve to support Ulster - the Tory press on Merseyside certainly thought so. 'Had the Party's leadership taken their lead from Liverpool', mused the *Courier*, before going on to paraphrase - with a flamboyance that was typical - 'The Pirate Song', an old sea-shanty: '[t]he clear trumpet call of the North has been answered by the thrilling fanfare of London ... call it rather an answering rear of thunder – the thunder of the guns that "awaken the deep when the combat's begun."'[104]

This momentum was prolonged by a number of meetings that took place throughout the country after the Home Rule Bill was presented to parliament on the 12th of April. James Craig was particularly busy. In March he traversed the West Country, speaking first at Ilfracombe,[105] followed by an address to a genteel gathering in the Seymour Hotel Assembly Room Totnes, where the banner above the stage read 'Devon stands by Ulster.'[106] He then moved on to a larger meeting in Plymouth.[107] Concerned aristocrats in the North also picked up the baton. Lord Percy (heir to the Duke of the Northumberland) told a meeting in Corbridge that the 'English people would answer as Ulster had – that never, under any circumstances, would they submit to Home Rule.'[108] He also convened a well-attended meeting in Gateshead on 'the Home Rule Danger' where the chief speaker was the ex Lord Advocate of Scotland.[109] Walter Long then took up the reigns of the anti-Home Rule bandwagon. In May the Marquess of Zetland invited to speak at the Middlesbrough Town Hall, where Long reasoned that Home Rule was in his opinion 'bad for the Empire and mad folly for Ireland,'[110] he was back in the North East a week later when he ascended the platform at Hexham.[111]

However, one of the most extraordinary meetings in which Long was involved took place in late April where we see the first recorded instance of something that would become a feature of anti-Home Rule street-theatre in this period: the torchlight procession. This phenomenon was perhaps at its most dramatic in places like Liverpool, Leeds, and Newcastle, yet it was in the sleepy cathedral city of Salisbury that we see one of its earliest manifestations in England. Long described it enthusiastically in a letter to Lady Londonderry, as a 'great demonstration', and according to him '4,000 people were there', and, fascinatingly, what followed was 'a great torchlight procession afterwards', to which he attributed 'really immense enthusiasm.'[112] In fact it was Primrose Day, and the 'New Sarum Habitation' had organised a large rally in the Market Hall to hear speeches against Home Rule, where many in the audience were sporting 'Lord Beaconsfield's favourite

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[104] *Liverpool Courier*, 27 January 1912
[105] *North Devon Herald*, 14 March 1912
[106] *Totnes Times*, 16 March 1912
[107] *Western Morning News*, 18 March 1912
[108] *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 13 April 1912
[109] C. Dixon Scott, see *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 26 April 1912
[110] *Yorkshire Post*, 11 May 1912
[111] *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 20 May 1912
[112] Letter from Walter Long to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 20 April, 1912. DRO, D/Lo/C666C195a. According to Long, 'a host of notables', including the Earl of Pembroke, had been present.

flower.'[113] Unfortunately for the Unionists, it appears that the gentlemen of the press were uninterested in such provincial meetings, as Long complained 'The Times ignored it, it is too bad ... no wonder that people think the country is apathetic when The Times does not mention a great meeting like this [sic].'[114]

Making sure that the press provided the Ulster campaign with the oxygen of publicity was a significant challenge for the Unionists, and the initial disinterest of the fourth estate would frustrate leading lights in the Party throughout 1912. Yet, although the apathy of the press was a problem, public apathy was showing signs of decline, especially in historically sympathetic areas, for instance in late February the Glasgow Presbytery of the Church of Scotland passed 'a motion of sympathy for Ulster.'[115] Carson articulated this feeling of optimism in a letter to Lady Londonderry, when he claimed that he thought that 'English commonsense is again asserting itself', before expressing his firm belief that the British people would be instinctively on Ulster's side

> It is impossible to believe that anything great and tending to greatness is going to be wiped out in an old valiant country like England. I should not wonder if there is a great reaction even amongst the poorer people and that they would realise that a body politic is and ought and must be a harmonious whole or it will cease to exist.' [116]

The contention that the working man was just as patriotic as his betters was a common argument put forward by the radical right in Edwardian Britain. Indeed the support given by the Labour movements of Australia and New Zealand to the concept of compulsory military service had convinced many leading Unionists that the failure of the Party's leadership to 'elicit the instinct of patriotism which existed amongst the working-class electorate' was nothing short of criminal.[117] This sentiment probably did exist, as expressed through support for the Ulstermen, yet for most workingmen bread and butter issues would often take precedence over recondite questions like Home Rule. An attitude well captured in a perceptive letter written to Lady Londonderry from Edward Saunderson (the younger) towards the end of 1912.

> I was talking to a working man in England ... and what he said seemed to put the case in a nutshell – he would like to help you against Home Rule but we must think of our wives and children first. I am certain you & I if we were working people & had felt the pinch caused by strikes would say something similar.[118]

This was a measured, sober, and practical reaction from both Saunderson and the anonymous 'working man.' Yet these were not adjectives that you could apply to

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[113] *Salisbury and Winchester Journal, and General Advertiser*, 20 April 1912
[114] Letter from Walter Long to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 20 April, 1912. DRO, D/Lo/C666C195a.
[115] *Glasgow Herald* 29 February 1912
[116] Letter from Sir Edward Carson to the Marchioness of Londonderry, undated March 1912 PRONI, D/2846/1/1/82
[117] G. R. Searle, 'Critics of Edwardian Society: The Case of the Radical Right', Alan O'Day, ed., *The Edwardian Age: Conflict and Stability, 1900-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 86
[118] Letter from Edward Saunderson to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 10 December, 1912. DRO, D/Lo/C672(4)(i)

Liverpool in this period, which was as much of a sectarian cauldron in 1912 as it had ever been.[119] In the previous year the Liverpool Corporation had been forced to convene a Peace Conference to try and find a way of ending the interminable sectarian conflict that had led to massive riots in the city in 1909. Some have seen the inchoate successes of those meetings as having marked a watershed in the city's social history, yet as one historian has concluded that 'rather than re-educating the rioters, the town fathers simply cracked down on them, once the threat of anarchy seemed to outweigh the political gains of further flirtation with violence.'[120] As I have argued elsewhere, 'although Merseyside's Tory establishment did not approve of sectarian violence, they were certainly not reluctant to harness those same impulses in support of the Conservative Party in the years after 1912.'[121]

Therefore we should not be surprised to discover manifestations of extreme support for the Ulstermen on Merseyside – on the day that the Home Rule Bill was presented to parliament. James Thompson, the secretary of the formidable Liverpool Workingmen's Conservative Association (LWMCA), saw fit to write to the city's Tory paper, the *Courier*, to claim that there were men in the city who were prepared to do more than simply vote for the Unionists:

> In the Liverpool district there is the same loyalty, the same determination to fight in the last ditch in defence of the Union as was so remarkably shown yesterday in Ireland, and if it should be necessary for Ulster to "hold the pass" I can honestly promise from a long and intimate knowledge of the spirit of the people of Liverpool and the surrounding constituencies that *at least 50,000 men will be ready and willing to stand by their fellow Loyalists in Ireland* [my emphasis]. We await events, but at the right time the call, if necessary, will be made, and it will not be made in vain.[122]

A month later, at the conclusion of an Orange demonstration in the city, Bro. William Touchstone, 'Grand Secretary of England', moved the customary resolution expressing allegiance to throne and constitution, and also the Liverpool Orangemen's:

> Determination resist by all means the passing of the Home Rule Bill, and assuring its fellow Protestants of Ireland of its determination to stand by them in any action they might take and through danger they might have to face in thwarting and opposing those who seek to dismember the United Kingdom. The Party who wanted Home Rule did not want it for themselves; it was a demand from the Church of Rome.'[123]

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[119] A. Shallice, 'Orange and Green and Militancy: Sectarianism and Working Class Politics in Liverpool, 1900-1914', *North-West Labour History Society*, 6 (1979/80), pp. 15-32.
[120] John Bohstedt, 'More than One Working Class: Protestant-Catholic Riots in Edwardian Liverpool', John Belchem, ed., *Popular Politics, Riot, and Labour: Essays in Liverpool History, 1790-1940* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992), p. 215
[121] D. M. Jackson, '"Friends of the Union" Liverpool, Ulster and Home Rule, 1910-14', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 152 (2003), p.104-5
[122] *Liverpool Courier*, 11 April 1912
[123] *Liverpool Courier*, 11 May 1912

This religious objection to Home Rule for Ireland was echoed in London at a meeting convened by the Nonconformist Unionist Association (NUA). In the nineteenth century 'anti-Catholicism had put down deep roots in Nonconformity', and one Congregationalist minister had written in 1886 that to vote for a separatist [i.e. Home Rule] candidate was 'to play into the hands of the Pope.'[124] Thus the NUA had been formed in 1886, to 'make manifest the fact that a large number of nonconformists, were opposed to the Home Rule proposals' as well as, it seems, the perceived skulduggery of the Vatican, as the Reverend J. Radford Thomson moved a protest against the recent Papal Decrees, *Ne Temere* (which was denounced in 1911 at a conference in Edinburgh as 'a proselytising instrument to help them in the reconquest of Britain for Rome rule')[125] and *Motu Proprio.* Moreover, Mr Kingsley Wood[126] assured their Irish guests, who included Carson, that

> This conference of representative Nonconformists pledges itself to resist Home Rule, being of the profound conviction that the grant of such a measure would gravely imperil religious liberty in Ireland, and this conference earnestly assures its Irish Protestant brethren of its unwavering support in the present crisis.[127]

Carson, who was loudly cheered on rising, then made an explicitly sectarian speech, despite beginning with the disclaimer that 'he would like to speak, as he always did, with every respect of his Roman Catholic fellow countrymen', as he had 'a warm admiration for their devotion to their religious convictions.' But he did not have a lot of esteem for the object of their devotion, as he 'he denied the right of any Church to confuse the spiritual with the temporal – (cheers).' Before concluding with the customary appeal for British support, believing as he did 'that with you and your co-religionists rests to a large extent the ultimate result. I cannot but think men of the same blood, the same religion the same traditions, worshipping in the same way, the same God, and loyal to the same King, will ever desert us (Loud cheers).'[128]

The anti-Home Rule campaign was beginning to gain some impetus in Britain. Craig stepped up his work in the West Country with a well attended meeting in Bristol. The local press reporting that despite the bad weather 'many thousands of electors' had filled the large main stand at the Bristol City Football Ground, determined 'to show the earnestness of their support for Unionist policy and their detestation of the Government Bill to cut adrift, ultimately, the western country from the King's British home dominions.' Although Craig was not in the front rank of Unionist speakers, he was a competent orator who could stimulate a crowd. The *Bristol Times* reported that he had

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[124] D. W. Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience: Chapel and Politics, 1870-1914* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1982), p. 91

[125] This claim was made by a Reverend Corkey from Belfast, see Megahey, p. 166; R. M. Lee, 'Intermarriage, conflict and social control in Ireland: the decree "*Ne Temere*"', *Economic and Social Review*, 17 (October 1985), pp. 11-17; the UWUC proposed to start a petition to protest against the decrees, see Urquhart, *Minutes*, p. 52

[126] He later became *Sir* Kingsley Wood, Air Ministry Chief in Churchill's 1940 cabinet who expressed horror that the RAF intended to bomb German factories in retaliation, spluttering, 'but ... they're private property.'

[127] *Irish Times*, 12 June 1912

[128] *Irish Times*, 12 June 1912

already 'excited the assemblage', yet 'it reached a still higher pitch when he added that rebellion would be against rebels and never, never rebellion against the King – whom they in Ulster loved – or against the Union Jack.'[129]

In the following month Carson attended a private dinner at the Manchester Conservative Club, from where he wrote to James Craig's wife, happily informing her that it was 'the biggest dinner ... that they have ever had', and adding, interestingly, that 'they are very keen about Home Rule [i.e. they opposed it] – but of course the Tariff Reform question upsets Manchester and whether we will do much good I don't know',[130] of which we will say more later.

The first real showpiece Unionist demonstration to take place in England was actually the rally at Blenheim Palace where Bonar Law made his infamous statement that 'I can imagine no length of resistance to which Ulster will go, which I shall not be ready to support'; through which, in the historian Sir Robert Ensor's pithily disapproving phrase, 'the driver simply threw the reigns on the horse's neck.'[131] Yet, aside from the speeches, the demonstration itself was of some interest, revealing the extent to which the Unionists relied upon the powerful alliance of political oratory and political spectacle. The *Times*, certainly understood what they were trying to convey, and the Party leadership would have been pleased with their report which claimed that the meeting was 'splendidly organised, framed in an incomparable setting and representative of the fighting strength of the Party through the length and breadth of the land.'[132]

The Duke of Marlborough had hosted Unionist meetings before at Blenheim Palace, notably in 1910 when Balfour and Austen Chamberlain had spoken, and he explained to Bonar Law that it was 'I fancy, a successful gathering and did good to the Party. I am anxious that the gathering in July shall be ... a concentration of all the forces at our disposal.'[133] It certainly was that, with over 3,000 delegates descending on the Duke's famous Oxfordshire pile, and, rather like the demonstration at Craigavon, special trains had been chartered – in this case they came bringing delegates specially invited from London, Manchester, Sheffield, and Shrewsbury.[134]

In its heyday the Primrose League had had a 'reputation for beer and skittles',[135] and it is interesting to see how there activities were aped at more formal Unionist gatherings in the years before the Great War. The Duke's guests were allowed to wander in the palace, to go boating on the lake, and they were treated to choral recitals and jaunty airs from the military band of the London Philharmonic. A marquee, 300ft by 100ft, had been erected where, after surveying 'the treasures of the great mansion' these rank and file Unionists

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[129] *Bristol Times and Mirror*, 12 June 1912
[130] Letter from Sir Edward Carson to Mrs Craig, 9 July 1912. Lady Craigavon Papers PRONI, T/3775/2/2
[131] Sir Robert Ensor, *England, 1870-1914* (Oxford: OUP, 1936), p. 455
[132] *Times*, 29 July 1912
[133] Letter from the Duke of Marlborough to Andrew Bonar Law, 15 May 1912. HLRO, BL/26/3/22
[134] Unionist from Lancashire and Cheshire were pleased to accept the invitation from Central Office, see minutes of meeting held on 27 June 1912 in the Minutes of the Executive of the Lancashire and Cheshire Federation of Junior Unionist Associations, p. 15. BLO, Conservative Party Archives, ARE 3/16/3
[135] Pugh, *Tories and the People*, p. 32

were treated to luncheon. And what a luncheon: the *Oxford Times* noted that it 'was no light task catering for such a multitude' and reported that a troop of waiters provided by Messrs Whiteley of London had arrived the previous night and prepared the following banquet

> 2,000lb of beef, 1,000lb lamb, 850 veal and ham pies, 700lb galantine of chicken, 1,000lb of pressed beef, 500lb of York ham, 12,500 rolls, 550 cottage loaves, 160lb butter, 12,000 assorted pastries, 100 gallons of pickles, 150lb of cheese, 500 gallons hock cup, 500 gallons claret cup, 600 gallons of beer, 100 gallons lemonade, 100 gallons ginger beer.[136]

Following this feast, a procession led by Law, Carson, and Marlborough then followed to the Palace Courtyard where the platform had been constructed. Once the official delegates were in front of the speakers 'the gates were thrown wide open, and a great crowd of people from the surrounding districts streamed into the courtyard.'[137] This crowd was estimated at numbering between 10-15,000 people (and considering they filled the courtyard, which was a full three acres in area, this was probably accurate). 'Has any English statesman ever addressed a bigger crowd', asked the local press - for this congregation was greater in their opinion than even 'Gladstone at Blackheath in 1871, and Disraeli at the Crystal Palace in 1874, and Lord Rosebery at Chesterfield.'[138]

There was something noteworthy too in the composition of the audience, as the *Times* observed: 'the assembly was the more impressive inasmuch as it was almost wholly composed of men', there were a few women hidden in the colonnades, but, on the whole 'it was a masculine meeting.'[139] Notable perhaps because despite their voteless state Edwardian women took an active role in Unionist politics. Given the content of Law's speech it is just conceivable that this was planned in advance, to try and impart a certain stern solemnity to the proceedings - much like the all-male processions that accompanied the Covenant signing later that year.

In this sense the *Times's* analysis of the crowd is revealing, for rather like the US Republican Party Convention in 2004, 'the part of Law's speech devoted to domestic issues aroused little fervour', but when he aggressively pledged the support of his Party for Ulster 'the audience rose from their seats and cheered this declaration for some minutes.'[140] Though this enthusiasm may well have been amplified by hock, claret, and beer this was a typical of a Tory political culture which firmly believed in the centrality of 'beer, cheer, and plum-pudding', and it is indicative that instead of seeing the Blenheim demonstration as an event of grave political note, the *Oxford Times* described it as 'just a big family Party.'[141]

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[136] *Oxford Times*, 3 August 1912
[137] *Times*, 29 July 1912
[138] *Oxford Times*, 3 August 1912
[139] *Times*, 29 July 1912
[140] *Times*, 29 July 1912
[141] *Oxford Times*, 3 August 1912

In the following month the Unionists kept their activities ticking over. At Hopetoun near Edinburgh, James Craig pleaded with an animated audience 'not to allow his fellow countrymen to be driven from under the shelter of the Union Jack, which held the cross of St Patrick combined with that of St Andrew (shouts of 'we never will').[142] What is more, they were cheered by their defeat of sitting Liberals at by-elections in Northern England and Scotland; and after the Unionist victory at N. W. Manchester, Craig announced to the *Daily Telegraph* that '[t]he result is a happy augury for the future. Where Manchester leads the rest will follow. Every victory of this kind will relieve the tense anxiety of Ulster for the future.'[143] Another Unionist victory followed soon after in Midlothian, where the sectarian atmosphere had moved the Scottish Unionist, John Baird, to write to Law advising that 'the religious question there ... may land us in difficulties.' The Catholic Unionist Lord Edward Talbot intended to speak in the division and Baird thought that it would 'be wise that you personally should definitely disassociate yourself from the anti-Roman Catholic attitude which will inevitably be assumed by a considerable number of our followers, and which I fear will alienate Conservative Roman Catholics.'[144] This was not the leader's foremost concern, and a gleeful Bonar Law announced to the press that 'when a Liberal government is defeated in Midlothian the end of the government must be near at hand.'[145]

How much these successes can be attributed to hard-line support for Ulster rather than the unpopularity of the Insurance Act in middle class areas, for example, is debatable. Despite the progress of Ulster propaganda, some Unionists still remained pessimistic, on all fronts: '[t]he feeling against Insurance seems to be rather diminishing', so confided Robert Sanders to his diary; not only that, but the country seemed to him to remain 'lethargic against Home Rule and Disestablishment.'[146]

The supposed lethargy, apathy, and disinterest of the British public may have frustrated the Ulstermen and their hard-line supporters in Britain, yet in 1912 the majority of Unionists in Britain still counselled restraint, revealing a belief that some amicable conclusion would surely be arrived at. Indeed, Lord Northcliffe, owner of the *Daily Mail*, wrote to the editor of another of his titles, the *Times*, that 'I have not cared for the violent language of Bonar Law, Carson and others.'[147] Others in England still believed in moderation 'most English Unionists to whom I talk deprecate Ulster doing anything [extreme] till there is a real prospect of the Bill being passed over the heads of the House of Lords', wrote Sir George Holmes to Lady Londonderry. 'My son tells me that that is the general feeling in Liverpool which is a very Conservative place.'[148] It certainly was: eight of its nine parliamentary divisions were represented by Unionists (nine out ten if we include the town of Bootle, which was represented by Bonar Law himself) – the other by the only Irish Nationalist MP with a constituency outside of Ireland, T. P. O'Connor.

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[142] *Belfast Newsletter*, 5 August 1912
[143] *Daily Telegraph*, 12 August 1912
[144] Letter from John Baird to Andrew Bonar Law, 30 August 1912. HLRO, BL/27/1/59
[145] *Morning Post*, 17 August 1912
[146] John Ramsden, ed., *Real old Tory Politics*), p. 47 (19 June 1912)
[147] Ferris, *House of Northcliffe*, p. 191
[148] Letter from Sir George Holmes to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 18 August 1912. PRONI, D/2846/1/7/29

And although Sir George Holmes may have asserted that Liverpool was urging restraint, the city would stage in that year one of the largest, and most melodramatic, political meetings in British history.

2

'Liverpool, Sister of Belfast':
Protestant Ulster's Lancashire bridgehead

An expedition which was thought to be sufficient for the relief of Londonderry was despatched from Liverpool under the command of Kirke.

Lord Macaulay, *The History of England* (1848; London, 1986), p. 309

When it was announced that Sir Edward Carson would pass through Liverpool after signing the Ulster Covenant on his way back to his home in Sussex, it was decided that the city should provide an impressive welcoming ceremony. The city was an obvious destination, for Liverpool was reaching its acme as a world city in 1912. Liverpudlian civic pride and arrogance were embodied by the near-completion in that year of the third of the city's famous 'three graces', the supremely elegant Cunard Building on the Mersey waterfront. Those buildings, which would 'jealously [uphold] Liverpool's provincial pre-eminence'; were built because the city fathers were determined to defend 'its prized status as the 'second city of Empire' against Glaswegian pretension.'[1] The city was a true metropolis, with its population peaking in 1911 at 753,000, and the tonnage loaded and unloaded at Liverpool was enormous, the Mersey being perhaps the greatest artery of the British maritime Empire.[2] As such the city had much in common with Belfast, another great imperial port. During the elections of 1910 a Protestant Minister from Merseyside had declared that if Home Rule was granted 'the great commercial link between Liverpool and Belfast would be crippled if it were granted ... no surrender!'[3]

There were political similarities too between the capitals of Ulster and Lancashire. Liverpool's peculiar commercial rather than industrial profile had created a preponderance of casual work on Merseyside and West Lancashire; this in turn had fostered a conservative and hedonistic culture which made the area 'unshakably Tory.' This political outlook was further entrenched by its proximity to Ireland, leading to a flourishing of 'a xenophobic Protestant Conservatism [with] powerful roots in religious/ethnic/economic hostility to the Catholic Irish.'[4]

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[1] Belchem, *Merseypride*, p. 3
[2] Tony Lane, *Liverpool: Gateway of Empire* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1987); Donald M. MacRaild, and David E. Martin, *Labour in British Society, 1830-1914* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), p. 69
[3] *Liverpool Courier*, 17 January 1910
[4] Tanner, *Labour Party*, p. 131; Sam Davies, *Liverpool Labour: Social and Political Influences on the Development of the Labour Party in Liverpool, 1900-1939* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996), pp. 31-7

Nowhere did this hostility flourish more than in the Liverpool Working Men's Conservative Association (LWMCA), who soon became involved in the preparation for Carson's arrival. The Association was very much the personal fiefdom of Alderman Archibald Salvidge. Described by one who knew him as 'a good deal of a rabble rouser',[5] he was, like many Tories, a local brewer. Although not an MP or a peer, he was one of the most prominent and vocal Unionist figures in Edwardian Britain, who, to the annoyance of some of his colleagues seemed to consider 'his place in the full glare of the limelight.'[6] He once wrote that 'the Union is to me first, last and everything',[7] and in Liverpool this meant getting out the Protestant vote to support Tory Candidates. Ramsay MacDonald, chastened by Labour's drubbing in a Liverpool by-election in 1907, confided his amazement (and admiration) to Salvidge: 'whatever the issue appears to be at the start, you always manage to mobilise the full force of Orangeism.'[8] Salvidge may have been interested in his own aggrandisement, but his national reputation was only possible because of the status and independence of his own city. As his son put it in a biography of his father, 'today the provincial centres seem content to become mere appendages of London. To that conception of the British system of commerce and government Salvidge never subscribed.[9] For the Ulster Unionists then, the support of Liverpool, and of Salvidge, mattered.

If the Ulstermen were keen to put into practice the 'Lesson of Craigavon' on the streets of Great Britain then they had come to the right place. Salvidge's LWMCA were experts in staging ostentatious public demonstrations calculated to impress the public, and they were assisted in this by the past masters of grand street processions: the Orange Order. By 1915 Liverpool had 197 Orange Lodges, a uniquely high number in mainland Britain,[10] and they formed a fundamental component of the city's hegemonic Tory establishment; and although they paraded in greatest strength on Orange anniversaries they often turned out in force in support of the Unionist Party.[11] It is no surprise therefore that they were heavily involved in the preparations for Carson's arrival,[12] but from reading the local press for September of that year it becomes apparent that right across the city excitement prevailed. Indeed, by special request suggested prayers and hymns for any religious services held on Ulster's behalf were printed in the *Liverpool Courier*.[13]

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[5] Petrie, *The Victorians*, p. 95

[6] Letter from H. Russell Wilkins (member of Warbreck and Fazakerley Unionist Association) to Andrew Bonar Law, 27 October 1912.

[7] Letter from Archibald Salvidge to H. Crowe, 24 December 1912. PRONI, D/989/A/8/2/9/1

[8] Salvidge, *Salvidge*, p. 100

[9] Stanley Salvidge, *Salvidge of Liverpool, Behind the Political Scene, 1890-1928* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1928), p. 306.

[10] These figures derive from Loyal Orange Lodge Annual Reports. I am grateful to Professor Don MacRaild for making these data available. Although P. J. Waller claimed in *Democracy and Sectarianism: A Political and Social History of Liverpool 1868-1939* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1981), that the city's Orangemen numbered between 15,000 and 20,000, this would mean that each lodge had at least 200 members which is unlikely.

[11] This was particularly true during the 1910 elections; see the *Liverpool Courier*, 17 January, 1910.

[12] On the 24th of September, the *Courier* published a photograph of Salvidge and some senior Orangemen surveying Sheil Park, the proposed site of the demonstration.

[13] *Liverpool Courier*, 20 September, 1912

As was customary Salvidge had favoured a demonstration at St George's Plateau, a Trafalgar Square-like space in the centre of the city beside the neo-classical splendour of St George's Hall; however certain influential persons recalled that this was the scene of violent disorder in 1909 and 1911, and were therefore minded to take the precaution of transferring the rally to somewhere less central, and therefore less contentious.

The seventeenth Earl of Derby was a landed magnate whose family seat Knowsley Hall lay just outside Liverpool, often seemed like the unofficial Unionist headquarters in the county.[14] Although Salvidge was the undoubted political 'boss' of Merseyside he still had to defer to the 'King of Lancashire'[15] as Derby was known, and it was at the noble lord's insistence that the meeting was held at an alternative location: Sheil Park in the northern Walton district of the city. Salvidge - ever the showman - was reluctant to lose such a spectacular venue, yet he nevertheless agreed with his diagnosis, a reminder of the volatility of Liverpool social life, 'to eliminate even the remotest possibility ... of friction with those who disagree with us, especially at a time when peace has been secured, and the prospects of maintaining it are so bright.'[16]

Among Liverpool's citizens at large there was obvious concern that the intended demonstrations would produce antagonism between the city's Protestant and Catholic communities. One historian has recalled Carson's previous insensitivity upon visiting the region. When invited to address a meeting of the South Lancashire Unionists, to which many notable local Catholics were invited, he had caused great offence by referring to the reigning Pope Pius X as 'a damned Italian priest' which was received with the 'evident delight of the large majority of the vast audience.'[17] The likelihood of sectarian friction had moved the local Labour paper, the *Forward* to sarcastically ask Salvidge in an open letter whether

> you will offer to mobilise the Working Men's Conservative Association to march on Dublin, storm the Home Rule Parliament and hang Messrs. Redmond, Devlin and O'Connor in front of Trinity College, unless the local football or music hall attraction makes the proposed excursion impossible.[18]

Certainly, the speeches of the Liverpool MP F. E. Smith would have given cause for concern. In Belfast, he avowed that 'if the Unionists of Liverpool are told that they have no concern with the quarrel, and that they must stand idly by while the liberties of Ulster are usurped, the rifles will go off themselves.'[19] Salvidge too used unfortunate language: describing the 'wonderful widespread interest' that the city has shown in the anti-Home Rule cause, '*now that the hour of battle draws near* [emphasis added].'[20] The Liberal *Birkenhead News* although making the dubious claim that 'it will take a good deal of

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[14] John Charmley, 'The View from Knowsley', *History Today*, 54:3 (2004), 47-53.
[15] R. S. Churchill, *Lord Derby 'King of Lancashire', The Official Life of Edward, Seventeenth Earl of Derby* (London: Heinemann, 1959)
[16] Letter from Archibald Salvidge to the Earl of Derby (undated) LRO/920 DER(17)33/SALVIDGE 1912.
[17] Petrie, *The Victorians*, p. 97
[18] *Liverpool Forward*, 27 September, 1912
[19] *Belfast Weekly News*, 25 September, 1912
[20] *Liverpool Courier*, 16 September 1912

provocative talk and action to engineer even a small riot in Liverpool', was still concerned enough to ask whether surely 'Mr Smith did not mean that Liverpool will rise in armed rebellion?'[21] To allay these fears the *Courier* commented in an article addressed to the 'Friends of the Union', that: 'The many thousands of Unionist workers and Orange brethren and sisters who will be found in the ranks on Monday are not of class likely to violate the spirit which animated the Peace Conference.'[22] This editorialising must have sounded somewhat Panglossian given Liverpool's track record, nevertheless it would turn out to be quite prescient, and instead of sectarian violence the demonstrations in Liverpool were actually entirely peaceful and rather decorous.

The solemn signing of the Ulster Covenant in the Belfast City Hall is one of the most famous episodes in modern Irish history; what is perhaps not as well known is what Carson did after he left Belfast that same night. This needs to rectified, not least because this was a time when a good deal of Irish history was played out outside of the island of Ireland. After the Covenant ceremony, Lady Londonderry received a telegram from Lady Florence Duncombe offering a 'thousand congratulations to you and Lord Londonderry on brilliant and wonderful success in Ulster', before adding 'hope England will wake up now.'[23] If England needed to be woken up, then it fell to Liverpool to do the waking. In the small hours of 29 September 1912 Carson's ship, the SS Patriotic, sailed out of Belfast Lough, serenaded by an emotional crowd of some 70,000 singing 'Rule Britannia' and 'Auld Lang Syne'; yet his reception when he sailed into the Mersey was, numerically at least, even more impressive.

Carson evidently appreciated how important it was to have demonstrations in England, as he wrote that 'the meeting at Liverpool on the way back will be the greatest affair of all and if we have good weather the whole campaign ought to be impressive.'[24] As it turned out the weather was awful: torrential autumn rain. Nevertheless, over 15,000 sodden people were waiting for him, at the Pier Head, with a further 100,000 gathered in streets leading to the city centre - all the more remarkable considering he arrived at seven o'clock on a Sunday morning. This transported the fervently Unionist *Courier* to paroxysms of delight: Carson's welcome had 'stirred their hearts and sent the blood tingling through their veins', and, in their opinion, deserved a place in the annals of their city's history:

> There have been many impressive greetings on Liverpool's promenade in honour of valiant warriors homeward bound from fields of conquest, of great statesmen intent on empire-building missions, and of illustrious men who have written their names on the scroll of fame ... no reception was ever so unique in its character, so touching in its

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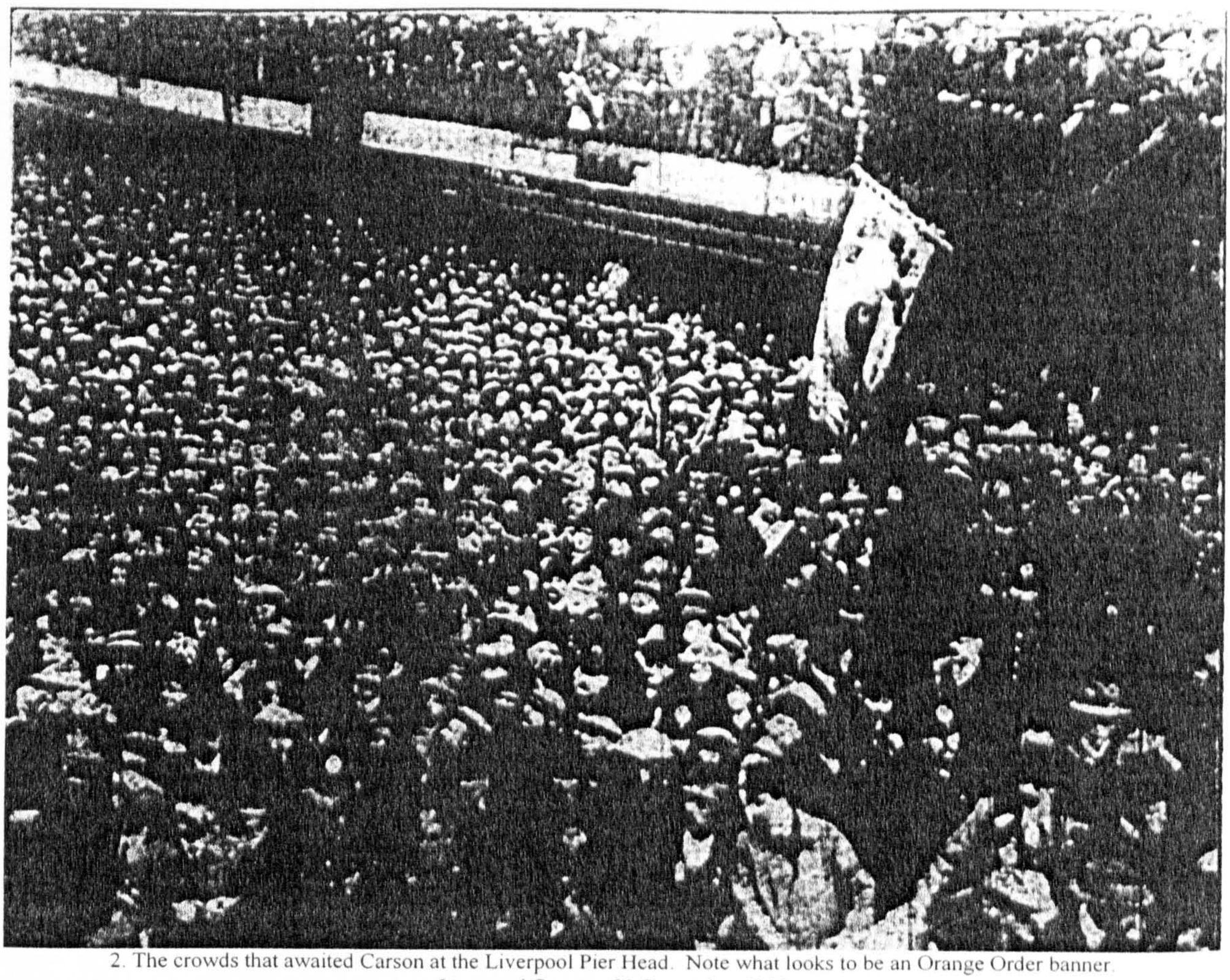
[21] *Birkenhead News*, 28 September, 1912
[22] *Liverpool Courier*, 28 September, 1912
[23] Telegram from Lady Florence Duncombe to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 30 September 1912. PRONI/D/2846/1/11/13
[24] Letter from Sir Edward Carson to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 7 September 1912. PRONI/D/2846/1/1/90. Carson constantly worried about his health, and in this letter he expressed his wish that 'it was over as I find it so difficult to make speeches night after night.'

1. This special commemorative illustration appeared in the *Liverpool Courier* on 27 September 1912. The *Courier* urged its readers to display it in their homes.

> cordiality as that which awaited the gallant Unionist leaders; [it was a] welcome worthy of British patriots.[25]

Specially arranged trams and trains had ferried those sympathetic to Carson's crusade to the Pier Head and rallying points had been arranged and publicised in the press.[26] (In his biography of his father F. E. Smith's son claimed that 'the meeting was practically spontaneous. There had been little preparation,'[27] which is obviously inaccurate.) From these muster stations the Orange Lodges, the LWMCA, and those affiliated to neither had assembled and marched in procession 'with bands playing, and banners flying' to the landing stage. As well as the marchers many sympathisers 'men and women of all ages and classes' had adopted the role of street liners; fulfilling that task so efficiently that one could have 'walked on the heads of the densely packed mass of humanity from Sir Thomas Street to the Pier head. It was a magnificent display.'[28]



2. The crowds that awaited Carson at the Liverpool Pier Head. Note what looks to be an Orange Order banner.
Liverpool Courier, 30 September 1912

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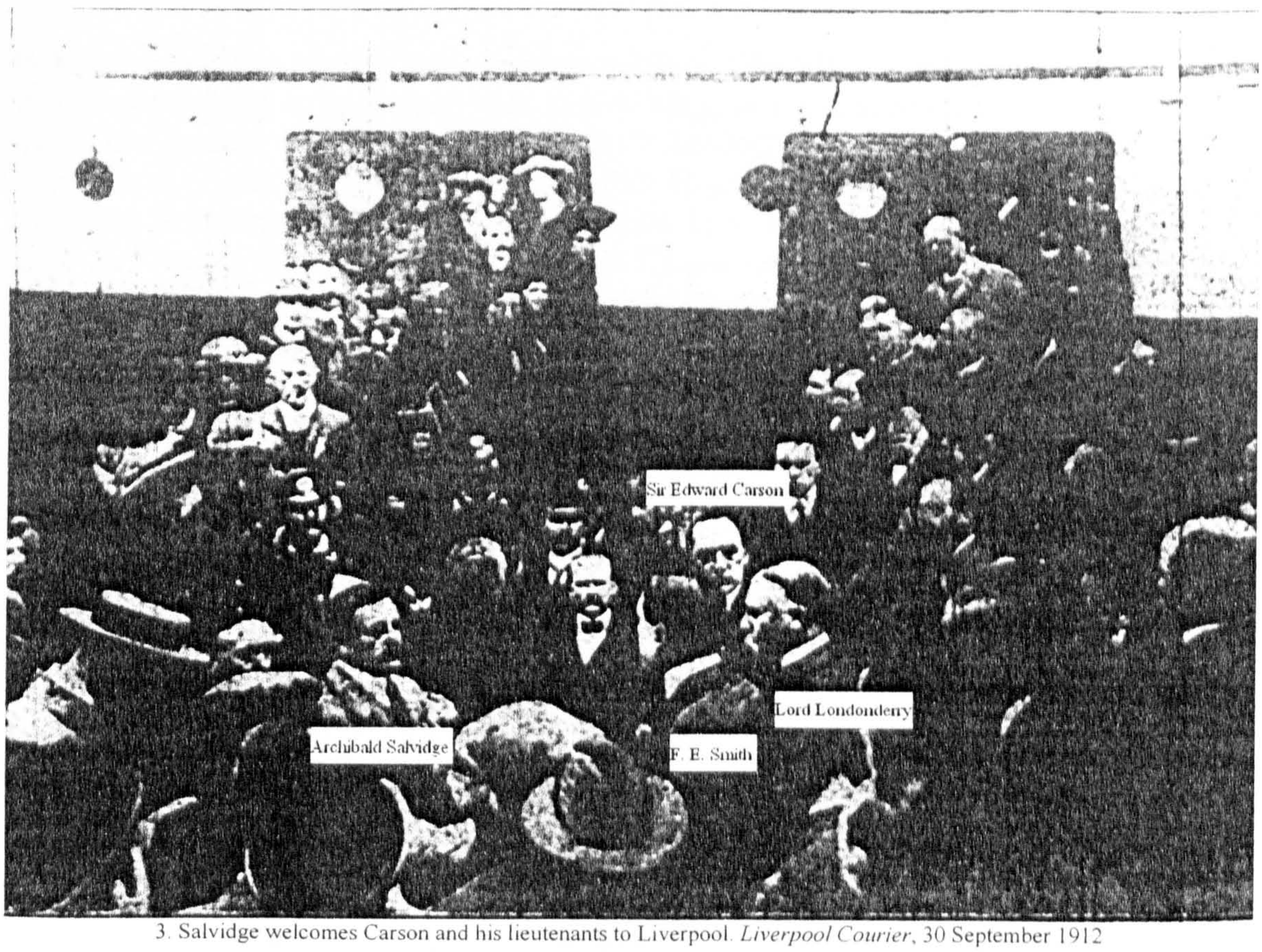
[25] *Liverpool Courier,* 30 September, 1912
[26] Transport timetables had been published in the *Courier*, 16 September 1912
[27] The Earl of Birkenhead, *Frederick Edwin, Earl of Birkenhead: The First Phase* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1933), p. 291
[28] *Liverpool Courier*, 30 September, 1912

Even the Liberal press was impressed: 'it was a Sunday morning of unwonted excitement for the city', admitted the weekly *Liverpool Mercury*, and over 60,000 hardy souls had missed their breakfast, and tramped through pouring rain 'mostly on foot' to be present at the Pier Head. There was a number of Orange bands *en grande tenue* waiting to entertain the sodden multitude with 'hymn tunes', and Pastor Wise (Liverpool's most infamous Protestant demagogue)[29] 'helped the memory of the singers by repeating the first lines of the verses.' When the ship hove into view Carson and Smith could be seen on the upper deck 'indulging in hearty handshake', and this 'little piece of theatricalism' as the paper put it, 'stimulated the beholders to renewed vociferations' and the frenzied waving of flags and handkerchiefs.'[30]

When Carson and his entourage had disembarked, they were ceremoniously welcomed to the city by Alderman Salvidge who asked them to accept a formal address. 'We gratefully acknowledge your magnificent efforts to preserve the integrity of the empire and to save from the tyranny of a Nationalist Parliament our fellow-Protestants and fellow loyalists in Ireland.' Salvidge continued in increasingly shrill tones:



3. Salvidge welcomes Carson and his lieutenants to Liverpool. *Liverpool Courier*, 30 September 1912

[29] His controversial career as a street preacher in the mould of Ian Paisley (but without the diplomatic streak) is discussed in Waller, *Democracy and Sectarianism*, p. 240.
[30] *Liverpool Mercury,* 6 October, 1912.

'the devotion which you have again and again shown in the cause of Ireland and the unity of Empire are nowhere more appreciated than in Liverpool', and that: 'We, the Unionists of Liverpool are equally resolute. We Unionists of the Port which is connected with Belfast in so many ways, stand by Ulster in this great struggle for political justice, Imperial unity and religious liberty.'[31] And in concluding, he presented Carson with an illuminated copy of the address amid renewed cheering.

Carson, standing bareheaded in the rain, was clearly moved; and, 'though somewhat tired by his arduous campaign', he was in 'warrior mood.'[32] He began by paying Liverpool the compliment that having just left the solemnity of Covenanting Ulster he had found himself at home 'in another Belfast.' He then modestly deflected Salvidge's praise by underlining the significance of those early morning crowds, recalling the speeches he had made earlier that year and in the first election of 1910. 'I am nothing in this fight. It is the cause that matters, and it is the cause the men of Liverpool now, and at all times, have sustained.'[33] He then shook hands with Salvidge 'as a token from Ireland to England' before joining the Alderman in awaiting carriages along with F. E. Smith, the Marquess of Londonderry, and others.

Before leaving the landing stage another verse of Ulster's recently adopted battle hymn 'Oh God our help in ages past' was lustily sung, and a procession was then formed to escort the leaders the half mile to Salvidge's headquarters at the Conservative Club on Dale Street. Before they could leave the Pier Head however the horses of the two main carriages were unharnessed, as they had been in Belfast,[34] and the vehicles were then drawn by 'sturdy men to the gaily decorated Conservative Club.' This unusual action was in fact an old English tradition (virtually obsolete by 1912) often associated with urban elections, which signified both literal support and ceremonial welcome.[35]

This was made all the more evocative when we consider that one of the passengers in those unhorsed carriages was Admiral Lord Charles Beresford. Beresford was something of a character: the third son of the Marquess of Waterford, he was tattooed as a young sailor, and spent most of his later years attempting to thwart Lord Fisher's plans for the Senior Service. Accompanying the admiral was his pet Bulldog, Kora, 'a formidable looking beast' beribboned in red white and blue. This fearsome animal, who, to his lordship's delight, was 'a general favourite with the admiring crowd, and received its fair share of applause; but it evinced only a rather bored interest in what was going on.'[36] For many however, this bluff seaman was the personification of John Bull; and the many popular depictions of him gave 'a sense of security: England was safe as long as Lord

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[31] *Liverpool Courier*, 30 September, 1912.
[32] *Liverpool Courier*, 30 September, 1912.
[33] 'From Liverpool I take to Belfast a message of courage. Heaven knows, if this nefarious conspiracy goes on and succeeds. I may be asking you for something more (cries of "you will get it" and "no Popery")', *Liverpool Courier*, 26 November, 1910.
[34] Stewart, *Ulster Crisis*, p. 64
[35] James Vernon, *Politics and the People: A study in English political culture, c. 1815-1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 83-84. This was often accompanied with a rendition of 'See the Conquering Hero Comes.'
[36] *Liverpool Mercury*, 6 October, 1912.

Charles and the Navy were on guard.'[37] Thus on a morning of symbolism the sight of the hero of *HMS Condor's* famous assault on Alexandria and a British Bulldog being pulled by hand by working men through the thronged streets of Liverpool would have had particular resonance for such a fervently patriotic crowd.

4. The horseless carriage on Dale Street, near the Liverpool Conservative Club. Carson second left, Salvidge at the front. *Liverpool Courier*, 30 September 1912

In Ulster they had been very keen that the demonstrations should be marked by their good order and solemnity. This would, firstly, convey the seriousness of their protest, and, secondly, any acts of violence or intimidation would merely play into the hands of their political enemies in England and Ireland. A draft manifesto exists in the archives of the IUA that calls upon the 'Loyal People of Ireland' to remember

> ... the supreme importance at the present time of not allowing themselves to be provoked into committing breaches of the peace. The Nationalists, exasperated by the powerful manner in which Ulster's unalterable opposition to Home Rule is being presented in the House of Commons, are above all things anxious to deprive Ulster of their well deserved reputation as the only law-abiding portion of Ireland: and they perceive that if Ulster Protestants can be driven into creating disturbance while the Home Rule Bill is under discussion in parliament discredit may thereby be cast onto the Union.[38]

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[37] Robert K. Massie, *Dreadnought: Britain, Germany, and the Coming of the Great War* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992), p. 501. Beresford's customary breakfast greeting at this time was "Good morning, one day nearer the German war."

[38] Draft Manifesto sent to Sir Edward Carson by the Marquess of Londonderry, Walter Long, and Ronald McNeill, 6 July 1912 PRONI/D/989/A/8/2/19/4

Thus A.T.Q. Stewart has described how, during Carson's 'brief progress' from Bedford Street to the Belfast City Hall, there had been 'no cheering; for once the throng of spectators stood silent and bareheaded as Sir Edward passed by.'[39] Sympathetic spectators had understood the significance of this: J. L. Garvin, editor of the *Observer*, reported that the Belfast streets had 'surged with cheering, but still no disorder, still no policemen, still no shouts of rage or insult. Yet no-one for one moment could have mistaken the concentrated will and courage of these people.'[40] In any case, as Eric Hobsbawm has pointed out, the potency of organised protest lay in their mere *potential* to become violent, which was enough to intimidate their opponents.[41] This was something that the wily Alderman Salvidge recognised (particularly after the riots of 1909); and he broadcasted his opinion in the press that 'our moderation adds to the force of our protest we intend to make against the Loyalists of Ulster.'[42]

It is instructive to learn that the city's avowedly Liberal paper, the *Post*, always alert to any instance of Tory rowdyism, had to concede that the processions had been marked by 'the utmost good humour and regard for order.'[43] This decorum lends credence to the claim made by second Earl of Birkenhead, F. E. Smith's son, that 'there was in their enthusiasm a religious tinge which showed that Liverpool had consecrated itself in what it believed to be a sacred cause.'[44]

The national press were mightily impressed with what they had seen. The *Daily Telegraph*, for example, noted that Salvidge had originally intended that the ceremonies should not begin until the Monday, but that 'local enthusiasm could not be restrained.'[45] The *Pall Mall Gazette* was also impressed by the zeal of the demonstrators, and pointed out that although 'rain had been falling heavily', huge numbers of people 'numbering not far short of a hundred thousand'[46], had made their way to the landing stage or had lined the processional route. Similarly, the *Times* thought the loyalists of Liverpool were 'the British reserves in support of Ulster.' But what struck them as most impressive was the almost exclusively proletarian composition of the crowds.

'The multitude was composed entirely of the working classes', claimed 'the Thunderer', 'thousands of them wore the Orange regalia. The war cries they shouted were those of the democracy of Belfast.'[47] Even the unsympathetic *Manchester Guardian* reported that the landing stage when the *Patriotic* drew near 'justified the crowded appearance given to it pictorially in the advertisements of steamship companies', and that as the thronged shoreline had waved 'hats and sticks and scarves' Sir Edward 'waved his own hat in

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[39] Stewart, *Ulster Crisis*, p. 64
[40] St. John Ervine, *Craigavon, Ulsterman* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1949), p. 236
[41] Eric Hobsbawm, 'Political violence and political murder', idem., *Revolutionaries: Contemporary essays* (London, 1973), pp. 209-15
[42] *Liverpool Courier*,, 24 September 1912
[43] *Liverpool Daily Post and Mercury*, 30 September, 1912
[44] Birkenhead, *Birkenhead*, p. 291
[45] *Daily Telegraph*, 30 September, 1912.
[46] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 30 September, 1912.
[47] *Times*, 30 September, 1912

reply.'[48] The *Daily Mail* made much of the gathering as a public spectacle, stressing the somewhat cacophonous music that accompanied the procession. 'There were brass bands, concertina bands, reed bands and fife bands', and that the journey from the Pier Head was made all the more difficult because of the masses of people in the streets. But despite these logistical problems, the ardour of the crowds was enough to overcome such trifling difficulties, as 'Sir Edward Carson's waggonette was pushed and pulled by a hundred willing hands.'[49] Carson had been gratified by this red carpet treatment; or as his earliest biographer put it 'Liverpool sister of Belfast, rough, big hearted, Protestant, Unionist, gave Carson a great welcome.'[50] But there was more to come, for the following night Carson as feted at perhaps the largest political meeting ever held outside of London.

The logistical operation behind the Sheil Park demonstration was similar to that of the previous morning with special trains and assembly areas earmarked throughout the city. The processions that evening were enormous, and, again the press noticed admiringly the proletarian composition of these demonstrators, the *Times* remarked that 'the labourers after a hard day's work in the sunshine at the docks and along the quays hurried to the three mustering points of the demonstration', and although they realised that it would be gone midnight when they returned home, 'their hearts were in the business.'[51]

The first contingent of demonstrators arrived at about a quarter to eight, and for the next hour 'the orderly brigades of working men' arrived steadily with 'their bands their banners and Union Jacks, their regalia and their mottoes.' The martial music that accompanied their arrival apparently included 'The Red, White, and Blue', 'Derry Walls', and 'The Boys of the Old Brigade', and these patriotic airs had a predictably stirring effect on the *Courier*, as their correspondent intoned: 'the bands blared out the ardour and the hope of victory' (although it was also noted that they often played 'ragtime melodies'). They were also pleased to note (despite the paper's ambivalent attitude to women's suffrage) that the grandest banner on parade was 'the beautiful white silk emblem' of the West Toxteth Conservative Women's Association, which declared: 'Unionism means Prosperity', and was given pride of place. Furthermore, Liverpool's hinterland's were also well represented: for apart from the 'Unionist regiments' that came from every ward of the city, there were deputations from Birkenhead, Bootle, the Wirral, Wallasey, Widnes and St. Helens.[52] Indeed, in an editorial the *St Helens Reporter* the paper announced that the support among St Helens Unionists for Ulster 'will materialise into something stronger than mere lip-service.'[53]

The combined forces of Unionism and Orangeism out on the streets of Liverpool merged to create a stunning aspect, both in scale and colour; indeed the *Mercury* remarked that the two organisations appeared to have 'coalesced in such a way to distribute as evenly as possible the spectacular benefit of the regalia of the followers of King William.'[54] The

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[48] *Manchester Guardian*, 30 September, 1912.
[49] *Daily Mail*, 30 September, 1912.
[50] Ian Colvin, *The Life of Lord Carson: Volume Two* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1934), p.152
[51] *Times*, 1 October, 1912
[52] *Liverpool Courier*, 1 October, 1912
[53] *St Helens Reporter*, 4 October 1912
[54] *Liverpool Mercury*, 6 October, 1912

aesthetic created by Orange men and women on parade was unrivalled by any other proletarian organisation; as their disciplined marching, their gaudy banners, and their martial music was very attractive - and effective, symbolising both muscle and gravitas. Indeed, one historian has succinctly described how the genius of the Order lay in their ability 'to mix carnival with military dignity.'[55] The city's Tory leaders recognised their value, and the Orange Order's representatives loomed large on the Union Jack draped platform. Liverpool's Grand Master John Holden had worked closely with Salvidge in organising the demonstration[56] - and of course they contributed most of the music.

Although the Orangemen were a vital joist in Liverpool's Conservative superstructure, they in fact embodied ideas that transcended ordinary political allegiance. Indeed the dominance of the Home Rule question in British political discourse in this period allowed the Order to portray themselves of both the constitution and the empire, because they believed that they 'held some kind of moral high ground by intertwining, almost imperceptibly, vague notions of civil and religious liberty, anti-Catholicism, bible Christianity, loyalty to Crown and Constitution' as well as 'political Toryism.'[57] Thus the high profile involvement of the Orange Order was crucial to interpreting the events of September 1912, in that we must not see this as simply a demonstration in support of the Tory Party.[58] Despite successfully utilising their support, the Conservatives could not control the Orangemen, and the lodges would have protested in some form or another over Home Rule whether it was official Unionist policy or not.[59]

It was an enormous crowd. *The Daily Post* thought the numbers involved to be at least 150,000, and they would not have been surprised if the figure had exceeded 200,000 - although they admitted that there were estimates of attendance as high as 250,000 and as low as 25,000! They also made much of the symbols displayed by the marchers, some more unorthodox than others: 'Flags, bannerettes, torches, swords, five pointed emblems, flags, caps, handkerchiefs, and occasionally babies were waved overhead amid cries intended to denote fealty to the Unionist leaders, and to the anti-Home Rule cause.'[60] To occupy the crowds as they waited patiently for Carson's arrival a fireworks display was laid on to vie with the music on offer; and the *Courier* mentioned that the arrival of George Wise, the notorious Protestant street preacher, engendered lively scenes as rockets were fired in his honour amid shouts of 'God Bless Pastor Wise.'[61] This was then followed by the procession of 'a miniature representation of William of Orange on a diminutive pony attended by child courtiers', who, the *Mercury* thought, although

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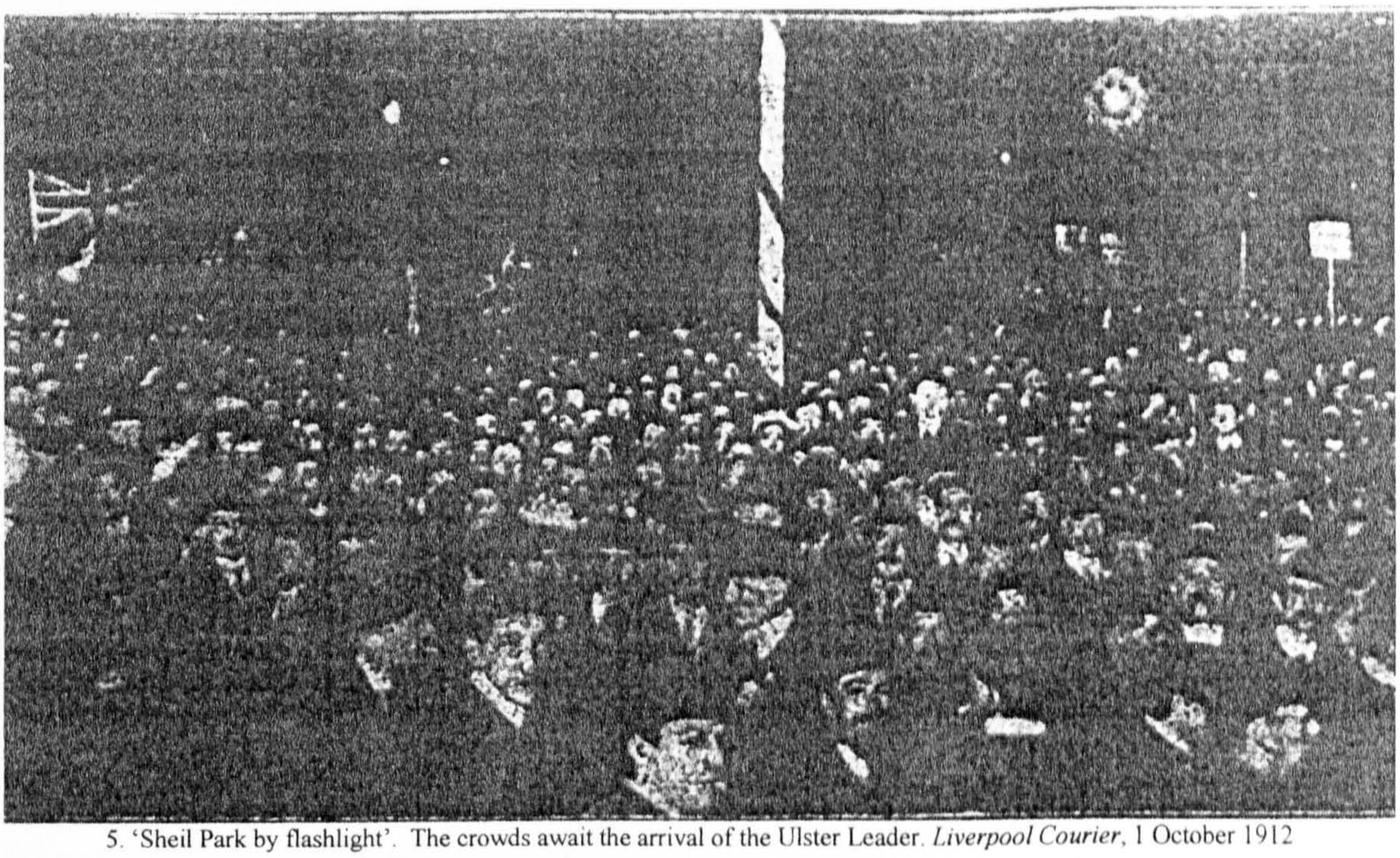
[55] Donald M. MacRaild, *Irish Migrants*, p. 119
[56] *Liverpool Courier*, 16 September, 1912.
[57] Donald M. MacRaild, 'Principle, Party and protest': the language of Victorian Orangeism in the North of England', Shearer West, ed., *The Victorians and Race* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1996), p. 140
[58] The crucial role of Orangemen at Sheil Park, and the massive numbers involved, questions somewhat Neal's claim that the crowds of up to 80,000 that Liverpool witnessed in 1876 'constitute the biggest Orange turnout in English history', see: Frank Neal, *Sectarian Violence*, p. 184
[59] 'The Orange Order also had a more generalised suspicion of Party politics', see Donald M. MacRaild, *Faith, Fraternity and Fighting: The Orange Order and Irish Migrants in Northern England, 1850-1920* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), p. 91
[60] *Liverpool Daily Post and Mercury*, 1 October, 1912.
[61] *Manchester Guardian*, 1 October, 1912.

creating a little diversion, could 'not prevent the time passing wearily till the arrival of the Ulster leaders.'[62]



5. 'Sheil Park by flashlight'. The crowds await the arrival of the Ulster Leader. *Liverpool Courier*, 1 October 1912

The VIP's - Carson, Smith, Salvidge, Beresford, Londonderry and Viscount Templeton (an Ulster peer) - arrived at Sheil Park just before nine o'clock, and their entrance precipitated more cheering and the singing of 'Rule Britannia' and the national anthem. Although Wise had been welcomed with pyrotechnics, the organisers reserved their heaviest ordnance for the appearance of Sir Edward on the platform: the sight of whom was the cue for the unfurling of a massive Union Flag which was itself lit by the massive electric arc lamps that had been strung across the park, providing illumination on what must have been a pretty dark October evening; indeed the *Times* remarked that the multitude was so far spreading 'that their outer ranks were lost in the darkness.'[63]

The welcome afforded Carson was more like Palm Sunday than the visit of a mere politician. This drew the somewhat acerbic comment from the *Mercury* that 'It was a reception not unworthy of Royalty', and, 'no greater heartiness could have been expected if the rightful monarch of these realms had been the object of their tribute.'[64] This is an interesting point: for all this ceremonial feting of Carson represented more than just homage to one man (although a member of the crowd had even shouted out 'King Edward the Eighth of Ulster'[65]), because this Irishman encapsulated a raft of ideas that defined Loyalism, namely: Protestantism, Empire and the Tory Party. Therefore the apotheosis of Sir Edward Carson on the streets of Liverpool differed little, in functional

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[62] *Liverpool Mercury,* 6 October, 1912.
[63] *Times*, 1 October, 1912.
[64] *Liverpool Mercury*, 5 October 1912.
[65] *Manchester Guardian*, 1 October 1912.

sense, from a royal coronation: as the homage imparted in both circumstances, is, and was, basically 'a series of ritual affirmations of moral values.'[66]

Salvidge as chair of the meeting formally welcomed Carson and his colleagues by declaring that 'the vast mass of Lancashire people gave the lie to the assertion that [Ulster was] ...out upon a bluffing expedition' and that if the Nationalists of the south of Ireland wanted to take Belfast they would 'have the men of Liverpool to reckon with.' Carson then rose to speak but was interrupted by a rendition of 'Auld Lang Syne', and he waited patiently for the singing to die down before he began his peroration. His first words were 'Well done Liverpool', at which someone in the crowd shouted, 'Well done Lancashire'. It was a long speech (the *Courier's* and the *Post's* transcripts of which are littered with regular interpolations of 'cheers', and 'loud cheers') and Carson used the opportunity to launch a snarling assault upon the Liberal government who had told Ulster that 'You really should fall into line with other Irishmen in the South and West', at which Ulster had replied that they had different attitudes to religion and loyalty - but their pleas had been dismissed by the supposedly treacherous government, or as Carson put it they had said 'damn your ideas of religion and damn your ideas of loyalty out you go'. Sir Edward took heart from the support that Liverpool had showed to his countrymen, and maintained that 'if there is a row I'd like to be in it with the Belfast men, and I'd like to have you with them. And I will (loud cheers).'[67]

After a brief speech from Lord Londonderry, F. E. Smith (in whose constituency the demonstration was held) mounted the podium. He then proceeded to make one of his most extraordinary claims: for it seems that otherwise sensible men had actually considered the practicality of sending armed Liverpolitans across the Irish Sea to defend Protestant Ulster. Smith calmly informed his audience that he had been speaking to three large Liverpool ship-owners that day, and that they had said to him that 'if, and when, it comes to a fight between Ulster and the Irish Nationalists, we will undertake to give you three ships that will take over to help Ulster in her hour of need 10,000 young men of Liverpool.' This was greeted by wild applause, at which 'F. E.' seized the opportunity and asked 'If the cattle maimers[68] are marching on Belfast and you can get the ships to take you there will you come to us?' At which there were loud cries of "Yes" and "what about Charlie Beresford for Admiral?"[69] Beresford then got to his feet, which caused the crowd to spontaneously sing a few verses of 'Boys of the Bulldog Breed' before he could begin. Eventually, that aged admiral gleefully announced that the nation had been told by the Liberals that the English were apathetic to Home Rule - but if that were the case 'then he had never seen so many apathetic people in his life.'[70]

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[66] Edward Shills, and Michael Young, 'The Meaning of the Coronation', *Sociological Review*, 1 (1953) p. 67

[67] *Liverpool Courier*, 1 October, 1912

[68] Some Nationalists in the South of Ireland had taken to punishing Unionist farmers by maiming their livestock.

[69] *Liverpool Courier*, 1 October, 1912

[70] *Liverpool Daily Post and Mercury*, 1 October 1912.

6. Introduced by Salvidge, Carson prepares to address the multitude in Shiel Park. Note the arc lights.
Liverpool Courier, 1 October 1912

To conclude the meeting, Sir Charles Petrie then moved the following resolution, which was in many ways Liverpool's own Ulster Covenant: 'This meeting of Liverpool citizens; representing all ranks of the Unionist Party solemnly pledges itself to unite with Ulster in resisting Home Rule'. This was augmented by the resolve of nation's Orangemen, who through the Grand Master of England, William Watson Rutherford (Unionist MP for West Derby) , informed the congregation that 'he had a mandate from the whole of the Orange Lodges in England to say they would stand by Ulster in her time of trial.'[71] The resolution was carried enthusiastically, and immediately afterwards the more distinguished occupants of the platform, which numbered roughly fifty persons (including a deputation of Orangemen from Barrow-in-Furness),[72] re-entered their waiting carriages ('four smartly equipped brakes pulled by nicely matched bays') whilst the various lodges formed up behind them in processional order for the march past the

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[71] *Liverpool Mercury,* 6 October 1912.

[72] Barrow was a hub of Orangeism in the North of England at that time, so it is perhaps not surprising that the town's Orange District Master and his deputy had been invited to join their Lancashire brethren at such an important occasion. Barrow's Orangeism is discussed in D. M. MacRaild, *Culture, Conflict, and Migration: The Irish in Victorian Cumbria* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998), esp. pp. 137-164.

saluting base at the Conservative Club. The *Belfast Telegraph* reported how Carson 'whose immobile face rarely indicates the emotions which he feels, was carried away by the splendid spirit which ran like a fire through the crowd', so much that 'he sprang up, standing on the box seat of the first vehicle, and 'brandishing round his head a blackthorn stick' (a gentleman's shillelagh perhaps?) that had been presented to him at Portadown.[73]

Torches were then lit and the crowd then formed up for the parade through the city. One commentator has noted that since the time of the Chartists torch light parades had been 'far more feared' than the 'family based day-long meetings' simply because the decision of workers to stay in the city after work left them grimy and forbidding.[74] Charles Dickens' description in *Barnaby Rudge* of the terrifying impact of flame lit faces is a powerful evocation of 'the widely shared sense of danger inherent in the presence of working men at an hour when should have been quiet in such a town.'[75] Therefore the capacity of such parades to intimidate is obvious (and television footage of the often notorious torch-light processions in small town Lewes on Bonfire-night bears this out), and no doubt the organisers would have had the local Nationalist community in mind. For their own people, however, it had the opposite effect, and as the procession wove its way through the streets of the city they were cheered by the many thousands of people who had lined the streets and filled the windows of shops and houses with their eager faces. The *Courier* thought that 'the torch light tattoo was a thrilling tableau in the great loyalist drama', a drama whose chorus was provided by the marchers who sang popular songs of the day including 'Hi Hi Mr McKay', and 'Dare to be a Daniel' (a song adopted by George Wise's bible class who then corrupted it to 'Dare to be a Wiseite'[76]).

Despite the length of time that the marchers were out on the street there was only one acrimonious incident of any note. It seems that a group of about a hundred Nationalists from the Scotland Road 'mostly women' had gathered at the Wellington Monument on Lime Street, and when the processions went past they became 'overcome by the excitement of the occasion, behaved rather foolishly. They answered the hurrahs of the demonstrators by calling for cheers for Home Rule and by singing "God Save Ireland."' Having been largely ignored by their loyalist counterparts some of the younger women decided to make a metaphorical stand for Catholic Ireland, as they 'took part in a sort of challenging dance in the middle of the roadway waving their hats and shawls wildly at the passing crowd.' This eccentric behaviour, although becoming 'dangerous' at one point, merely obliged the local constabulary to drive these Irish women down William Brown Street before the main body of marchers could confront them, thus averting a potentially explosive incident.[77]

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[73] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 1 October 1912
[74] Martha Vicinus, '"To live Free or Die": The Relationship between Strategy and Style in Chartist Speeches, 1838-39', *Style*, 10:4 (1976), p. 485
[75] John Plotz, *The Crowd: British Literature and Public Politics* (London: University of California Press, 2000), p. 135
[76] Those more offensive lyrics were: 'Dare to be a Wiseite!/Dare to Stand alone./Dare to be a Protestant./And to Hell with the Pope of Rome.' Bohstedt, 'Protestant-Catholic Riots', p.182
[77] *Liverpool Daily Post and Mercury*, 1 October 1912.

Interestingly, women played a significant part in the proceedings - on both sides it would seem. For although the sober members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians could decide to remain aloof, their womenfolk were not as easily placated, and formed the vanguard of what little Nationalist opposition there was. The Unionist women were it seems just as difficult to restrain. According to the *Birkenhead News* there were large numbers of Orangewomen travelling on the Mersey ferry that night,[78] and, as they superciliously put it 'the behaviour of some of these women was anything but calculated to add to the dignity of womanhood.' It seems that a blameless young man had also been waiting to board the ferry that night; however, this unfortunate bystander happened to be wearing a tie with a 'neat and unobtrusive shamrock design', and this had evinced the ire of the Orange ladies as he was made 'the subject of many unflattering comments by [those] fair observers.'[79]

This is not to say that all the women involved were as badly behaved, far from it, but it appears that they were often the most enthusiastic. The *Times* noted that the 'number of women wearing Orange regalia who accompanied their menfolk was remarkable. In Ulster itself no women joined the procession.'[80] The *Post*, in describing the scenes at the Conservative Club when Carson's carriage arrived remarked that 'generally speaking the women demonstrated more vociferously than the men.'[81] This is interesting, as by 1912 a Liverpool Women's Unionist Federation had been inaugurated which mirrored the Ulster Women's Unionist Council. Indeed, a speaker from Belfast, Mrs Mercier Clements, was invited over from Ulster by those Liverpool ladies to address their members in St George's Hall. The meeting was quickly sold out, and the *Courier* saw fit to mention in reporting the proceedings that 'My word on it! The women know how to applaud!'[82] Thus it seems that despite their voteless state, there were a remarkable number of women involved in Unionist politics - and, indeed, the Orange Order - and although many people in this period saw Ireland as the keystone of imperial unity, it is probable that many women recognised that the Empire's first line of defence ran through the home.[83] Furthermore, this female involvement illustrates perfectly John Belchem's view that women 'were active participants in politics in all but Westminster itself.'[84]

When Carson's carriage reached the club at eleven o'clock the scene was one of high excitement. 'Eager hands grasped out to have the honour of assisting the speakers from the brakes, at which point F. E. Smith turned to Beresford and asked '[d]id you ever see anything like this in your life?' to which the old admiral replied 'Never, never. It is

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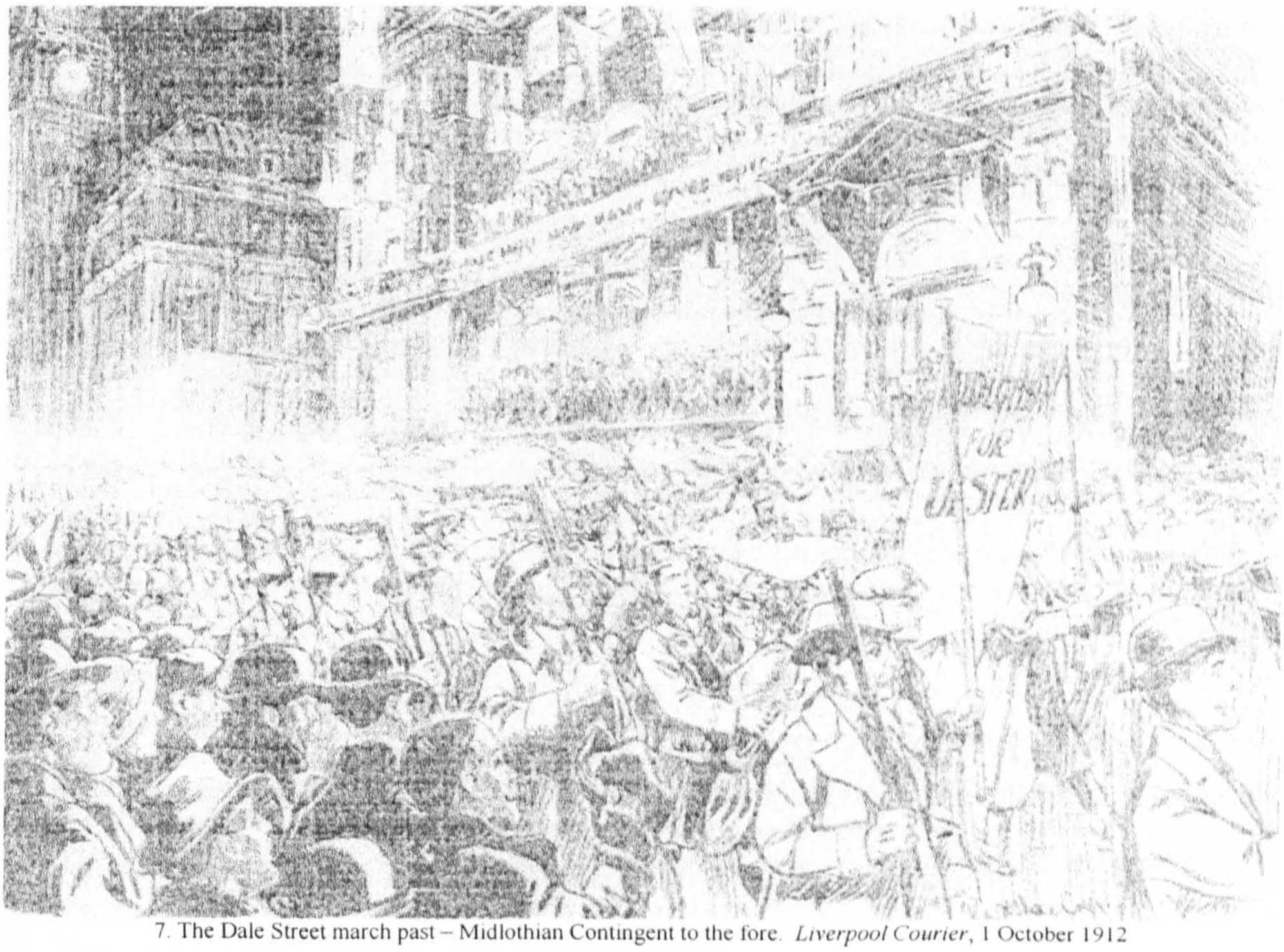
[78] Interestingly, Liverpool's female lodges increased from 3 in 1881, to 43 in 1915. These figures derive from Loyal Orange Lodge Annual Reports. I am grateful to Professor Don MacRaild for making these data available.
[79] *Birkenhead News*, 2 October 1912.
[80] *Times*, 1 October 1912
[81] *Liverpool Daily Post and Mercury*, 1 October 1912.
[82] *Liverpool Courier*, 19-20 March, 1912
[83] The importance of women and motherhood in the quest for 'national efficiency', an Edwardian *cause-celebre*, has been discussed in, A Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', *History Workshop*, 5 (1978).
[84] John Belchem, *Class, Party, and the Political System in Britain in Britain, 1867-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 14

magnificent.'[85] The club had been festooned with Union Jacks, and atop its parapets, surmounted by a sparkling crown, were the mottoes 'We Stand By Ulster', and 'We Will Not Have Home Rule'. It was estimated that over forty, predominantly Orange, bands took part in the march past, including a pipe band from Edinburgh who carried a placard that read 'Midlothian for Ulster'. The procession went past the platform at a 'swinging pace', upon which next to Carson stood F. E. Smith who was described as 'the brilliant cavalier of militant Unionism' and Salvidge as 'the Field-Marshall of Liverpool's Conservative Workingmen - the political warriors of the city.' '"You have lit the torch of Empire"', Carson remarked to the *Courier*'s reporter, who replied "Yes, and by Heaven it shall never be extinguished by the hands of traitors."'[86] The singing of the National Anthem brought the demonstration to a close, eight minutes before midnight.



7. The Dale Street march past – Midlothian Contingent to the fore. *Liverpool Courier*, 1 October 1912

Despite the evident success of these Liverpool demonstrations, the Unionists were again frustrated by their failure to stir the nation at large, something which they blamed the press for. Although the *Times* was quite generous in its reportage, noting that the crowds had 'far exceeded in numbers even the largest of the Ulster demonstrations'[87], and declaring that 'these Northern gatherings have brought that conviction home to many thousands of Englishmen'[88] Salvidge had been disappointed by the coverage that they

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[85] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 1 October 1912
[86] *Liverpool Courier*, 1 October 1912
[87] *Times*, 1 October, 1912
[88] *Times*, 30 September, 1912

had received in Northcliffe's titles. Indeed, he wrote to him to complain about Liverpool's lack of column inches, to which the famous press baron had tersely admitted his culpability: 'I consider your complaint entirely justified. The London staff did not realise the importance of the occasion. The omission will be overtaken. The person responsible has been dealt with.'[89] By and large however, 'Sheil Park had been reported by most papers, although often not in much depth and of course not all of them were sympathetic.

The *Manchester Guardian* had been the only organ to report the presence of 'a great constabulary army of horse and foot who were present to keep the theological disputants of Liverpool within due bounds', and they had been quick to point out the peculiarity of Merseyside politics, as although 'the Orange Party which figured so heavily in last night's proceedings stands for a local ascendancy' this 'does not stand in accord with the general sentiments of the kingdom.'[90] Furthermore the *Catholic Herald* was alive to the latent sectarianism of the demonstrations, denouncing them as 'a campaign of the most virulent religious bigotry the world has ever known', before going on to describe Sir Edward Carson as 'a second hand Lord George Gordon.'[91]The *Belfast Telegraph* was delighted, however, 'It was magnificent. It was thrilling, and would have been a wonderful object lesson to those who regard the Englishman as an unresponsive Saxon', but with just a hint of envy at the scale of the demonstrations at Liverpool, it went on to benevolently patronise Liverpool's efforts

> While one must candidly admit that there was not the springy step, the precision of movement, and the correct alignment of the Ulster Loyalists to be noted in the ranks of the marchers it could not be denied that there WAS EVIDENCE OF THE SAME FIRM PURPOSE and indomitable spirit which we in Ulster know so well ... they had not the same air of dour and dogged determination, but they were keen and resolute, and their faces caught the glow of enthusiasm as they passed their chosen leaders and acknowledged their salutations.[92]

After Liverpool, Carson proceeded to Glasgow, Britain's other Orange citadel, for his first ever speech on Clydeside. Three months earlier the Orange Order in Scotland had flexed their muscles in spectacular fashion, as the re-emergence of the Irish question had been a factor in mobilising a record 40,000 Orangemen to gather in Coatbridge at a 'monster' anti-Home Rule demonstration in Lanarkshire.[93] Special trains had brought in Orange contingents to the 'Iron Burgh' from the surrounding towns of Airdrie, Motherwell, and Wishaw, as well as Glasgow, Paisley, and Partick, but many travelled from as far as Greenock in the west, Prestonpans in the east, Falkirk in the North, and

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[89] Salvidge, *Salvidge*, p. 123.
[90] *Manchester Guardian*, 1 October 1912.
[91] Lord George Gordon fomented one of eighteenth century Britain's worst instances of anti-Catholic rioting. This is discussed in George Rude, 'The Gordon Riots: a study of rioters and their victims', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th Series, VI, 2 (1956), pp. 93-114.
[92] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 1 October 1912
[93] *Coatbridge Leader*, 13 July 1912, see also Elaine McFarland, 'Marching from the Margins: Twelfth July Parades in Scotland, 1820-1914', T. G. Fraser, ed., *The Irish Parading Tradition* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), p. 69

Kilmarnock in the south. What is more, there were a dozen 'colonial and United States delegates' present, preparatory to their attendance at the triennial Orange Council.[94] The town was festooned with bunting and banners which read 'Welcome to Coatbridge', and dozens of lodges and fully 76 pipe, brass, and flute bands took place in a spectacular procession through the main streets of the town which took two and a quarter hours to pass a given point. The atmosphere was noisy, bibulous, but good-humoured. One old lady caused great amusement through her desire 'to show her colours – an orange petticoat by the way', several excited - and inebriated - bystanders stripped off and threw themselves in the canal and this 'extraordinary aquatic display' was loudly cheered. The man from the *Coatbridge Express* calculated that 'if all the ribbons and sashes worn had been stretched out lineally they would have formed a double line of communication with Belfast.'[95]

The Reverend Ness, the Grand Master, presided at Dunbeth Park, and in a long speech to the brethren he beseeched the Almighty to prevent the Home Rule being enacted. Using the words of the National Anthem, Ness declared of Asquith and the Liberals 'Heaven confound their politics and frustrate their knavish tricks' - but he spoke of the Unionist Party as 'their staunch friends in parliament.' Then Bro. J. Victor Logan denounced the prospect of the 'rule of the Pope in Ireland' and that Home Rule meant 'the death of righteousness', and concluded his speech with a resolution 'opposing Home Rule and promising every assistance to the Ulster Loyalists.'[96] This was seconded by Frederick Thomson - the Unionist candidate for North West Lanarkshire – who, like his colleagues in Liverpool, showed no compunction in expressing his Orange sympathies. Thomson pointed out 'that as a Scotsman, what an enormous debt the whole Protestant world was under for the stand the Ulstermen made [in 1690].'[97] The police, considering the scale of the meeting, had been concerned that blood would be spilt, and, typically, in the aftermath of the meeting some fisticuffs were indeed exchanged between several drunken parties at Coatdyke. But nevertheless, one local paper was pleased to note that 'everything passed off with honour and credit to Protestants and Roman Catholics alike.'[98]

Carson's visit to Glasgow, was in comparison more low-key and the local press reported that he had arrived quietly in the afternoon with no formal reception.[99] This contrast in political cultures between ostensibly very similar Merseyside and Clydeside is intriguing. For although there was sympathy in Glasgow for Ulster this railed against the prevailing Liberal traditions of the city, a tradition which viewed political self-determination as entirely fair. 'In Glasgow', noted one perceptive historian, 'Protestant working men did not necessarily identify with the entire nation state [whereas] ... in Liverpool, national identity overwhelmed other questions in the beliefs of working men.'[100]

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[94] *Coatbridge Leader*, 6 July 1912
[95] *Coatbridge Express*, 10 July 1912
[96] *Glasgow Herald*, 8 July 1912.
[97] *Coatbridge Leader*, 13 July 1912, Mr Goff, the Unionist candidate in North East Lanarkshire was also present.
[98] *Airdrie and Coatbridge Advertiser*, 13 July 1912
[99] *Daily Record*, 1 October 1912
[100] Smith, 'Class, skill, and sectarianism', p. 202

Carson's welcome in the St Andrew's Hall was still impressive, 5,000 people were present with a further 2,000 people in the nearby Berkeley Hall.[101] Carson, impressed by the sea of Union Jacks that greeted him inside the hall, declared to the audience (rather like Neil Kinnock at the 1992 Labour Party conference) 'that's all right.'[102] In his speech he asserted that 'just as Ulster had made up its mind and Liverpool had made up its mind, I think Glasgow has made up its mind on Home Rule', and, in a surprisingly uncontested remark he told his *Scottish* audience that 'the day that Home Rule was passed would be the beginning of the sunset of England's glory.'[103] Nevertheless, he soon had the audience eating out of the palm of his hand. His earliest biographer told of how a friend of Carson's, Sir T. Comyn Platt, had recalled how 'He raised those sober Glasgow people to their feet in uncontrollable enthusiasm at one passage, at another "hundreds were moved to tears."'[104]

Carson was delighted with the success of these meetings, and not least by their decorum which, as we have seen was considered vital by the Ulster Unionists. He informed Lady Londonderry that 'every thing passed off without a hitch', and 'I am especially pleased at the good order and sobriety of the people – they are the finest I have ever seen.' Revealingly he also told her that he had 'never imagined the Covenant would be such a success both in Ireland and Great Britain. The demonstration at Glasgow was the most magnificent and enthusiastic I have ever seen.'[105] They were not alone: for as we have seen, very few of their Unionist colleagues - in Ireland and Britain - had been optimistic about likely support for the anti-Home Rule campaign, but the fervour of these meetings must have given them a fillip.

Jack Sandars, a Unionist insider, sent a congratulatory note to Wynyard Hall, the County Durham seat of the Londonderrys, stating that he would like to offer his 'tribute of admiration to the way the Ulster Organisation has been dramatically directed to stir the English mind'; Bonar Law himself wrote privately that 'Ulster has killed home rule as I always felt sure it would'; and another Tory, Robert Sanders, acknowledged that 'the Ulster Covenant business has certainly had a great deal of effect', though he did go on to say that 'the by-elections were won on the insurance act.'[106] More publicly, Carson was pleased to announce his Ulster colleagues that 'our action has made a profound impression throughout the United Kingdom'.[107] (He even received £60 from a woman in London who had held a two day bridge tournament to raise money 'for the Ulster defence

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[101] *Daily Record*, 1 October 1912. It was also noted that the chairman of the meeting, Charles Scott Dixon, had in his constituency many Orangemen.
[102] *Glasgow Herald*, 1 October 1912
[103] *Times*, 2 October, 1912
[104] Colvin, *Carson*, pp. 153-54. Platt eventually became David Niven's stepfather
[105] Letter from Sir Edward Carson to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 5 October 1912. PRONI, D/2846/1/1/91
[106] Letter from J. S. Sandars to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 5 October 1912. DRO/D/Lo/C671(82)(i); letter from Andrew Bonar Law to H. A. Gwynne, 30 September 1912, BLO, MS Gwynne Dep 20; Ramsden, ed., *Real old Tory Politics*, p. 50
[107] *Times*, 7 October 1912

fund'.)[108] Indeed, it is true to say that the events of Liverpool heartened the Unionists of Ulster. In an open letter to the *Courier*, Carson declared that 'the demonstration was, I think, unique even in the annals of Lancashire, and it has given great encouragement and satisfaction to those whose passionate longing is not to be cast out';[109] and in a biographical sketch of Salvidge that appeared in the *Belfast Weekly News*, the paper concluded that his actions proved that 'the loyalists of Ireland do not stand unsupported.'[110]

Curiously enough, it seems that the great meetings in the throbbing metropolises of the Mersey and the Clyde were followed by meetings in the rural east midlands. 'Talk about conquering Ulster' a confident F.E. Smith asserted at Lincoln, 'so far as I can find out they have got to conquer the whole of Lincolnshire'[111]; and at Uppingham in the neighbouring county of Rutland, Lord Castlereagh addressed an anti-Home Rule demonstration organised by the local habitation of the Primrose League, and where a large part of the evening was spent 'singing patriotic songs.'[112]

In December, Carson found himself at the English Riviera at Torquay (a place so stuffily genteel and 'stuck up' that it had even maddened local resident Rudyard Kipling into wishing that he could dance through the town 'wearing nothing but my spectacles').[113] As befits such a conservative town, a mostly male audience of 3,000 turned out to hear him and were 'packed together almost like herrings in a barrel.'[114] As now seemed customary, this meeting was followed by a boisterous torchlight procession - and it was estimated that between 10 and 12,000 participants and spectators crowded the streets. The *Times* reported that Carson was to have addressed an overflow meeting from the balcony of the Conservative Club, but he was prevented from doing this by 'a crowd of Liberals' who mocked Ulster's martial pretensions by arriving 'attired in helmets and carrying dummy rifles' and shouting him down.[115] This Liberal contingent was headed by a band and banners which read 'King Carson's Braves' and 'Carson's Unionettes', and as a result of all the pushing and shoving between these rival factions 'two or three persons were taken to hospital.'[116]

As events in Torquay attest, there were some in England who found Carson and all he stood for distasteful, but, as those protesters and supporters bear out, he was certainly never ignored. Therefore should we now reassess the supposed apathy with which the British public responded to Carson's cause? Indeed, it was in September of 1912 that the UWUC minuted the observation of Lady Londonderry that 'our one danger is that England is apathetic, but I now think we see signs of awakening!'[117]

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[108] Letter from Alice Corry to Sir Edward Carson, [no date] 1912, PRONI, D/1507/A/3/20
[109] *Liverpool Courier*, 10 October 1912
[110] *Belfast Weekly News*, 10 October 1912
[111] *Times*, 12 October, 1912
[112] *Lincoln and Stamford Mercury*, 20 December 1912.
[113] P. J. Waller, *Town, City, and Nation: England, 1850-1914* (Oxford: OUP, 1983), p. 137
[114] *Torquay Times*, 13 December 1912
[115] *Times*, 9 December 1912
[116] *Torquay Times*, 13 December 1912
[117] Urquhart, *Minutes*, p. 62

The events surrounding the Covenant certainly had a noticeable effect in Scotland. At a meeting in the Queen's Hall, Edinburgh, Pastor Jacob Primner moved the following resolution

> We the undersigned citizens of Edinburgh and neighbourhood, wish to united ourselves with our fellow protestants in Ireland in their solemn league and Covenant that, with the help of God, they shall never suffer themselves to be thrust out from the protection of Great Britain and be placed at the mercy of Popish priests in Ireland, and their satellites, whose past history has been one of boycotting, cattle-driving, cattle-maiming, diabolical outrages and horrible murders.[118]

Following the attack by a Party of men from the Ancient Order of Hibernians upon a Presbyterian Sunday School outing in Ulster, churches in Dunfermline, Selkirk, Dalkeith, Dunbar, Fisherton, Dundonald, and Ayr all passed resolutions of sympathy;[119] and in October 1912 a meeting of the United Free Church was called to 'correct' the impression given that they were not in sympathy with the Ulster Protestants.[120] One historian has demonstrated how live this issue was in Edwardian Scottish politics: in December at a meeting of a Glasgow Liberal Unionist Association minuted that 'we in the West of Scotland, of all in the British Isles, should hold out a strong hand to them in their hour of distress.'[121] However, despite all evidence to the contrary, Unionists remained pessimistic about the support Ulster enjoyed. For as late as January 1913, an ex-Provost of Glasgow complained 'that the Presbyterian democracy of Scotland [did] not sympathise more heartily with the Ulster People.'[122]

The Unionists were beginning to gain ground by mobilising their core supporters, and Jeremy Smith has noticed how 'the momentum established by the Unionists stood in stark contrast to the government. There was no triumphal crusade across Britain to rouse support for Home Rule.'[123] Only one cabinet minister, Winston Churchill, ventured out to make a speech, at his Dundee constituency, and that was only a mild disquisition on the possible merits of federalism as a solution to the Home Rule problem – hardly a match for the fire and brimstone of the Unionists. In November, Law delivered a typically ferocious speech to a highly partisan audience in the cavernous Sun Hall in Liverpool. 'The strength of the Home Rule agitation does not come from Ireland (a voice: "Rome!"), snarled Law, 'it comes from the eighty Irish members who have their votes to sell, and from the British Party which is not ashamed to buy them (cheers).'[124] For the Unionists under the leadership of Bonar Law, the campaign against Irish Home Rule was a zero sum game, and, as virtually nothing was off limits, that included playing the Orange card for all it was worth. Indeed, F.E. Smith had made the slightly sinister remark after the demonstrations in Liverpool and Glasgow that they were significant in that 'they

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[118] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 1 October 1912
[119] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 3 October 1912
[120] *Glasgow Herald*, 31 October 1912
[121] Graham Walker, *Intimate Strangers*, p. 41
[122] *Glasgow Herald*, 31 January 1913
[123] Jeremy Smith, *Tories and Ireland*, p. 61
[124] *Liverpool Courier*, 9 November, 1912

transcended ordinary political meetings because behind them loomed something sterner than politics'[125] Smith did not specify, but we can guess what that something was: namely good old fashioned sectarian atavism.

Some observers picked up on the intersection of politics and creed at the time. The businessman and polemicist F. S. Oliver wrote to Law how he was 'very much perturbed by & opposed to certain things which have been said in regard to Ulster not only by Carson, F. E. Smith and others, but also by yourself.'[126] A Party member from the Home Counties wrote to Law to inform that they were losing Roman Catholic support over this issue, notably a Party chairman from South Buckinghamshire who 'cannot stand the attacks made on his faith in the Home Rule controversy.'[127]To which Law replied with a good degree of equivocation 'I hate bringing in religious bigotry as much as you do, and I *think* I have always avoided it in my speeches, and shall certainly *try* to do so in future' [emphasis added].[128]

One contemporary observer, Lady Ismay Crichton-Stuart (wife of a Unionist MP who became the Marquess of Bute), could barely contain her anger. 'The Unionist Party have allowed religion to be dragged in to Party politics', she wrote, 'and the Party to which one has always been able to look for religious protection is now dragging religion into a political battle and embittering Roman Catholics all over the British Isles.' Catholic workers on her estate in the Scottish borders had told her that they will vote for Asquith at the next election, and there would be problems in her husband's Cardiff constituency 'unless there is some change in the attitude of the Unionist Party towards Catholics.' Crichton-Stuart recognised Ulster's right to resist Constitutional change, but 'Ulster is <u>not</u> entitled to indulge in disgusting abuse of Roman Catholicism ..... is it absolutely necessary for England to support this side of the question?'[129]

For a Party 'sick with office hunger'[130] - opposition to Home Rule was absolutely necessary, as Law himself argued: 'After all it is not Ireland which we hope to influence but England and Scotland and I am convinced ...that here the one fact that tells in our favour is the proposal that Nationalists should not only govern themselves but govern the great community like that around Belfast ... it is simply a question of the best way in which to win the fight.'[131] In other words, Law obviously recognised that Redmond's refusal to countenance partition played into Unionist hands, as, for a great deal of the British electorate, the plan to put Protestants under the control of Catholics simply would not wash. And it is apposite that three days after Law wrote to Wilson thousands of Methodists gathered in Wesleyan Westminster Hall to protest against Home Rule.[132]

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[125] John Campbell, *F. E. Smith, First Earl of Birkenhead* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1981) p. 331.
[126] Letter from F. S. Oliver to Andrew Bonar Law, 10 August 1912. HLRO, BL/27/1/32
[127] Letter from C. Alfred Cripps to Andrew Bonar Law, 5 October 1912. HLRO, BL/27/3/8
[128] Copy of a letter from Andrew Bonar Law to C. Alfred Cripps, 7 October 1912. HLRO, BL/33/4/58
[129] Letter from Lady Ismay Crichton Stuart to Andrew Bonar Law, 4 October 1912. BLP, 27/3/6
[130] Roy Jenkins, *Asquith* (London, 1964), p. 275
[131] Letter from Andrew Bonar Law to Mackay Wilson, 16 Nov 1912. BL Papers 33/4/67
[132] *Times*, 20 November 1912

There were, however, some residual problems for the Unionists in the shape of Tariff Reform. This controversial issue had rumbled on for some years without resolution, and despite Bonar Law's new broom, there were some within the Party who still cherished Joseph Chamberlain's brainchild - not least his son, Austen an erstwhile leadership candidate. Thus, as John Vincent has noted, 'the happy belief of November 1912, that the Unionists were winning on the Home Rule issue, was succeeded within a month by a panic about food taxes which nearly destroyed the Party from within'[133] Having previously promised a referendum on Tariff Reform if elected to office, Law - under pressure from the Chamberlainites - had withdrew this pledge at a speech in the Albert Hall.

This withdrawal caused great consternation in Ulster, from where R. G. Sharman-Crawford wrote to Carson to tell him that 'up till the Albert Hall pronouncement our people were working with the highest confidence and hope, and the reports from the widely spread company of workers and canvassers sent by the UUC and IUA were most cheering as to the widespread and substantial growth of anti-Home Rule opinion in Great Britain'. To resuscitate Tariff Reform as Unionist Policy, and at this critical time, was, in his opinion, severely misguided as 'the people of Great Britain abhor the prospect of food taxes ... the reports of our canvassers are now most discouraging.' Sharman-Crawford also identified the implications that this would have in strategically important parts of Britain which would be basic to any future Unionist success, as the prospect of food taxes, he argued, 'will not afford the necessary security to the tens of thousands of North of England and North Britain electors, who are free fooders before any other issue, and whose support is essential to winning the seats in which they vote' and 'Unless we win freely in Lancashire, in the west of Scotland, and in the North East of England, we fear we cannot expect a Unionist turnover.'[134]

The Albert Hall announcement also made waves in Liverpool. Evidently Salvidge had been deeply shocked to have this unwanted distraction, particularly after the successes of the Covenant campaign, and wrote to F.E. Smith expressing these concerns. Smith wrote back to him, in a letter that reveals the division and myopia of the Unionist Shadow Cabinet, as well as signs that Smith and Law were still patiently advocating the rejection of Tariff Reform.

> You say that Liverpool with its traditions of Unionism cannot sacrifice Belfast to the extreme principles of tariff reform. Is it not a crushing reply that Carson and the Ulster members are unanimous in their support of Bonar Law? Is Liverpool more specially charged with the defence of the Union than Belfast? You are entirely wrong in supposing that the position has been rushed by the extreme Tariff Reformers'.[135]

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[133] John Vincent, ed., *Crawford Papers*, p. 284

[134] Copy of a letter from R. P. Sharman Crawford to Sir Edward Carson, 31 December 1912. PRONI, D/989/A/8/2/10/2. Walter Long, writing from Bradford, informed Bonar Law of the unpopularity of Tariff Reform in Yorkshire, see letter from Walter Long to Andrew Bonar Law, 9 December 1912. HLRO, BL/28/1/11

[135] Letter from F.E. Smith to Archibald Salvidge, 28 December 1912, Salvidge Papers

It appears that the only two members of the shadow cabinet who opposed 'going on with food taxes' were Londonderry and Derby (representing Ulster and Lancashire where the Union was a vote winner). Smith went on to declare that he 'doubted greatly the wisdom of the course but I did not oppose, having regard to the assurance of Bonar Law', possibly because they had both identified a narrow pro-Ulster platform as being the most profitable policy, but that they still had to persuade their colleagues. But this persuasion would have to be conducted in private, as Smith put it 'if only we had had 'the sense to hold our tongues – if Northcliffe would have stopped intriguing, the *Courier* kept quiet and Derby used his influence not to stimulate difficulties but to keep Lancashire quiet – we could have arrived at a solution or, at the very worst, have won by fighting.' The public airing of dirty linen had simply infuriated Smith, who must have perceived the upturn in Unionist fortunes and even threatened to resign his Liverpool seat over the row, as 'Lancashire Unionism should have met the declared policy of the leaders by private representation not by public disaffection.'[136]

On New Year's Day 1913, the Earl of Iveagh wrote to Carson exhorting him to 'convey to Mr Bonar Law the hope that he might be able to prevent the cause of the Unionists in Ireland being defeated by the unpopularity of the "Food Taxes."'[137] Carson replied, and just as Smith had done he urged a united front because he too recognised the potential for success that lay in supporting the leader, as he admitted too Iveagh 'I fear it will be impossible to find anyone who will be able to fight the battle in the same way and command public confidence.'[138] Though the maintenance of Party unity and the discreet abandonment of Tariff Reform would be one of the new Unionist leader's most important achievements, the resolution of this problem required some deft footwork by Law, who at one point also offered his resignation. Nevertheless by early 1913 Joseph Chamberlain's great cause had been dispensed with as Unionist policy.[139]

In many respects Tariff Reform was just too divisive, too convoluted, and too expensive for it to ever capture the public imagination. What popularity it did have arose from its strident jingoism - but even such a relatively simple programme as Tariff Reform required some intellectual engagement, not to mention the probability of increased taxation. In contrast the Ulster campaign contained all of the former but without any of the latter. As one historian has noted of the Primrose League, its attraction sprang from the 'sheer woolly imprecision' of its peculiar 'brand of patriotism-imperialism-monarchism', avoiding the advocacy of precise or novel policy 'maximised [their] popular appeal.'[140] For many, Conservatism's strongest appeal derived from its rejection of innovation and its adherence to orthodoxy, therefore it was much easier, and indeed, more psychologically satisfying for lumpen Tories to bellow "no!" at the Irish Home

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[136] Letter from F.E. Smith to Archibald Salvidge, 28 December 1912, Salvidge Papers
[137] Letter from the Earl of Iveagh to Sir Edward Carson, 1 January 1913 PRONI, D/989/A/8/2/11/1
[138] Copy of letter from Sir Edward Carson to Earl of Iveagh, 13 January 1913 PRONI, D/989/A/8/2/12/1
[139] For an exhaustive account of how this came about see, Alan Sykes, *Tariff Reform in British Politics, 1903-1913* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), chap. 12.
[140] Pugh, *Tories and the People*, p. 93

Rulers, than to become fiscal experts. For the Unionist MP Leo Amery, writing in July of 1914 Ulster was simply 'the easiest thing to talk about.'[141]

A precedent for this strategy had been set in 1898 when prominent Tories like Archibald Salvidge had vociferously supported the Church Discipline Bill, and Salvidge had elucidated this simple policy at the time with Machiavellian candour

> The easiest road to immediate political success was to find an issue which demanded no practical policy ... but one about which people felt strongly, and the opponents were sure to be in a minority. The Protestant campaign was a perfect answer to this problem.[142]

What is perhaps surprising is that it took the Unionists so long to work this out. The first commentator to identify this in print was perhaps Lord Willoughby de Broke in 1913. 'The ordinary Tory', he began, 'does not necessarily follow the niceties of a disputation about the details of a Referendum or a Tariff ... he is guided by tradition rather than abstract theory.' Fundamentally, Broke argued, voters are moved to vote for the Unionists because they embody 'his own prejudices and sentiment.'[143] Bonar Law, like Salvidge, was not sentimental and had more perspicacity than many of colleagues and apprehended the wisdom of such a simple platform. With his tongue only slightly in his cheek, the Tory peer Lord Selborne seemed to endorse Law's hard-line strategy, when he wrote to him to say that 'the English are a simple people and your attitude of mind is one that they will thoroughly comprehend and appreciate. I tell you that because you are not an Englishman and I am a very stupid Saxon.'[144]

To put it very crudely, in the years before the Great War it was the stupid Saxons who were drawn toward the 'Stupid Party'; and 1912 was the year in which this appeal first began to make a serious impact on the British public. Whether the Liberal government paid any attention is another matter. Nevertheless, by the end of the year the Unionists of Ireland were exceedingly cheerful about the prospects of their cause. In the Annual Report of the IUA, they noted the success of their leafleting campaign in Britain (titles of which included: 'A word to Scottish electors from those in Ulster who are their kin'; 'The Anti-Coronation Demonstration in Dublin'; and 'Irish Protestant Prelates on Home Rule and Church Property').[145] They concluded that 'Unionists throughout the kingdom are full of hope and confidence as to the ultimate triumph of their cause.'[146] Moreover, in a

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[141] Leo Amery to Neville Chamberlain, 25 July 1914, John Barnes and David Nicholson, eds, *The Leo Amery Diaries*, Vol. I (1980), p. 101.

[142] B. D. White, *A History of the Corporation of Liverpool, 1835-1914* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1951), p. 193. Interestingly, Salvidge had no qualms about playing the Orange card despite his own wife being a devout Roman Catholic, see Waller, *Democracy and Sectarianism*, p. 179

[143] Lord Willoughby de Broke, 'The Unionist Position', *National Review*, LXII, 368, October (1913)

[144] Letter from the Earl of Selborne to Andrew Bonar Law, 19 December 1912. D. George Boyce, ed., *The Crisis of British Unionism: Lord Selborne's Domestic Political Papers, 1885-1922* (London: The Historian's Press, 1987), p. 93-94

[145] *Irish Unionist Alliance, Twenty-seventh Annual Report, 1911-12* (Dublin 1912), p. 14. PRONI, D/989/A/7/4

[146] Ibid., p. 5

confidential document, the Ulster Unionists noted with pleasure that 'many English and Scotch members of Parliament and candidates visited Ulster during the past year ... it is encouraging to notice the deepening interest which the Unionists of Great Britain are taking in the Irish question'.[147]

[147] *The Ulster Unionist Council and Ulster Union of Constitutional Associations Year Book ... 1912* (Belfast, 1912) [confidential circulation only]. Smythe Papers PRONI, D/972/17

3

Echoes of Midlothian:
Sir Edward Carson's first tour of Great Britain

> Our imaginary foreign observer would certainly be struck by our gentleness: by the orderly behaviour of English crowds, the lack of pushing and quarrelling, the willingness to form queues ...
>
> George Orwell, *The English People* (1947; London, 2001) p. 293

The haughty conviction of Edwardian Unionists that they were the natural Party of government was well captured in a remark made by Arthur Balfour in 1906. 'The great Unionist Party' he declared, 'should still control whether in power or whether in opposition the destinies of this great empire.'[1] This arrogance meant that his Party had a tendency to underestimate their opponents, leading to an unrealistic incredulity when issues which they championed were not supported by *everyone* in the Kingdom. This was particularly true of the early stages of the anti-Home Rule campaign, when, despite mobilising thousands of supporters onto the streets of Northern cities, they regularly displayed a self-pitying, and slightly petulant streak upon realising that there were still many in England who still could not care less about Ireland. Thus, in January of 1913, a Unionist from Huntingdonshire bemoaned in a letter to Carson how

> [t]he sad thing is that here at the Empire's heart it is so difficult to evoke a responsive chord. It seems as if Great Britain itself had fallen deeper than ever into apathy and lethargy with regard to the deadly dangers lurking in Home Rule. Is it that too much sport and play leaves too little room in her mind for grave realities?[2]

What Watson did not appreciate is how the Edwardians could still do both - often at the same time. For the strongest suit of the Unionist political machine in these years was their ability to combine the sacred and the profane: political protest against constitutional change coupled with the visceral thrill of participation in carnivalesque demonstrations.

In Edwardian Birmingham, Joseph Chamberlain had led this resurgence in spectacular ceremonials. When Chamberlain had left his home city for an imperial tour of South Africa in 1902 'there was a lengthy civic dinner, a horse drawn procession along a route illuminated by 4,000 torch-bearers ... and a great fireworks display, ending in a fire portrait of Chamberlain and his wife.'[3] Throughout this period Unionists led the way in

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[1] Powell, *Edwardian Crisis*, p. 43
[2] Letter from William Watson to Sir Edward Carson, 14 January 1913 PRONI, D/1507/A/4/2
[3] Cannadine, *Churchill's Shadow*, p. 123

injecting theatricality into politics. In the later nineteenth century, the great political debate between the Liberals and the Tories was, in one respect, personified in the contrast between the buttoned-up sobriety of W. E. Gladstone and the imperial razzamatazz of Benjamin Disraeli. For all the appeal of Gladstonianism '[t]here was also a popular John Bullish Toryism centred on Protestantism, which evoked the world of roast beef, plum pudding and good beer; it counterposed a frank and hearty enjoyment of life and sport to the more earnest world of Liberalism.'[4] There is evidence to suggest that this distinction endured at least until the Great War, as the Unionists remained eminently accomplished at injecting jollity into political gatherings.[5]

The opening of a new branch of the Junior Imperial League in Croydon, South London, in March of 1913 demonstrates this point. The local press reported how the League were determined that the opening of their new club premises 'should be something more than merely a formal affair.' Consequently they arranged, in conjunction with the 'Conservative Van', a procession to their HQ where there was to be a 'display of appropriate Lantern pictures from the windows of the club.' Of course, this type of meeting was not just for the enjoyment of the participants: for one of the fundamental reasons behind any such occasion, was, as the *Croydon Guardian* put it, to 'make a great impression on the public by their numbers.'[6]

On the day of the opening ceremony, the proceedings proved absolutely typical of Unionist political meetings. The procession was led by a man carrying a Union Jack; a band playing patriotic airs followed behind; then 'marching' came a 'strong body of "Imps"' - the members of the League (and their ranks would prove to be fertile ground for the British League for the Support of Ulster and Union).[7] As usual, an aristocrat was involved, in this case Viscount Castlereagh, who was in the lead carriage, which was pulled 'a pair of fine horses, illuminated by electric light.' In a striking combination of the old and the new 'the electric light adorned the horses' ears and lit up streamers in the colours of the league and the Party, and the coachman also wore an electric light to illumine the rosette in his button hole.' A bodyguard for the carriage consisting of six men was furnished, and, as it was an evening meeting, 'red and blue flares projected from the windows [and] burned impetuously in the wind.'[8]

This procession, which ended with an open air meeting, had everything which characterised Unionist convocations in this period: colour, good order, the prominence of the union flag, martial music and martial imagery, and an imaginative combination of tradition with modernity (in this case electrically lit draught animals). Therefore, when we consider the scale and form of these Party demonstrations, as reported in the press, it is worth viewing them as being as significant as a vote cast, as studying their actions

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[4] Hugh Cunningham, 'The Language of Patriotism, 1750-1914', *History Workshop Journal*, 12, autumn (1981), p. 21

[5] Harrison, notes that the Tories would often out-do the Whigs in terms of political ceremony, *Crowds and History*, p. 223

[6] *Croydon Guardian*, 15 March, 1913

[7] See for example the letter to Andrew Bonar Law from H. M. Imbert Terry, 29 August 1913. HLRO, BL/30/1

[8] *Croydon Guardian*, 22 March, 1913

becomes another way of apprehending how those who have been left voiceless by posterity actually believed. As we shall see, there were plenty of such episodes in 1913 that are ripe for interrogation.

The first half of 1913 saw the Unionists maintain their encouraging momentum. When the Home Rule Bill was presented to Parliament in January, the capital witnessed some early signs of how unpopular this measure was with the British public, as a protesting crowd of several thousand people marched from Parliament Square to the Constitutional Club escorted by mounted police. The club had been lit with flares, and the crowd gathered in front and sang the national anthem and Rule Britannia (which the Unionists often seemed to consider as their own Party songs), and someone 'burned a copy of the Home Rule Bill which was greeted with wild enthusiasm.' When James Craig appeared at the window he 'could hardly make himself heard due to the cheering.' Craig told the crowd that he had come from Ulster that morning with the message '"that they in Ulster looked to London in her hour of need (cheers) they would always remain – he asked them to believe it – absolutely true to the same constitution as they in London did. He knew they would not look in vain" (loud cheers).'[9] Importantly, there was no corresponding Liberal demonstration. As the *Times* commented, 'if a "joy night" to celebrate the passing of the Home Rule Bill had been contemplated it was a dismal failure.'[10]

With the passing of the third reading of the Home Rule Bill in the Commons on the 16 January 1913 Ireland had truly now resumed centre stage. In Lancashire, Lord Derby wrote to his organising secretary in the county to make sure 'that everything possible will be done to impress on the constituencies, by street corner meetings, vans, etc. the real danger we are in with regard to Home Rule.'[11] And in the rest of the country the second rank of Unionist speakers kept up their low-key small-town tour. At a crowded meeting at Shepton Mallet in the West Country, James Craig 'received a rousing reception' as well as the 'heartfelt sympathy of ... a great and overwhelming majority of the people of Somerset.'[12] The following month he was in South London addressing a meeting from in front of a huge banner emblazoned with the legend 'Dulwich supports Ulster', and at the conclusion of the meeting the 'vast audience simultaneously arose to their feet and wildly cheering waved miniature union jacks, a band, hidden from view adding to the enthusiasm by playing the "Red, White, and Blue" in which all present joined in singing.'[13]

At the Scottish Unionist Conference in Edinburgh, Bonar Law stuck to his guns, to which a 4,000 strong audience in the King's Theatre clearly responded. His entrance was stage-managed as always. For an hour before the commencement of the meeting a 'large choir of ladies of the Primrose League sang patriotic airs to an accompaniment by the theatre orchestra', (indeed, the press was struck by the 'large number of women present') at the

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[9] *Dublin Express*, 18 January 1913
[10] *Times*, 17 January 1913
[11] Undated draft letter from the Earl of Derby to Dr Eastham (Honorary Secretary of the Lancashire Unionist Division) LRO/920 DER (17) 17/7
[12] *Shepton Mallet Journal*, 10 January 1913
[13] *South London Press*, 14 February 1913

meeting and when Law appeared is entrance was 'heralded by a fanfare of trumpets, and there were loud and prolonged cheers' the audience singing 'For He's a Jolly Good fellow', followed by the national anthem.[14] Referring to Ulster's resistance, Law boomed that 'they would be right in resisting, and they would be supported in this resistance by all that was best in England and Scotland', this was met with prolonged cheering, which seemed to embolden the Unionist leader who declared that 'if the people of Ulster sacrificed their lives in that cause, there would be an explosion from one end of the United Kingdom to the other to blow sky high the government which issued the order which produced the result (renewed cheers).'[15]

This Unionist enthusiasm in the Scottish capital was mirrored by interesting events on the west coast of Scotland. In February, the Earl of Leitrim, an Irish aristocrat, had instructed his chauffeur to hire a lorry to transport a cache of rifles and ammunition across to the Clyde for shipment to Ulster, and he was pleased to encounter some sympathetic Scots at Renfrew who helped repack the contraband.[16] What is more, the day after the Home Rule Bill was defeated in the Lords, Viscount Castlereagh spoke to the ladies of the Women's Unionist Alliance of the West of Scotland (which had been formed, according to the Glasgow press 'to resist Home Rule for Ireland in 1886 [and] was now as firmly determined as it was then to resist, as far as lay in its power, the disintegration of the United Kingdom').[17] In a somewhat abstruse address, Londonderry's heir did his best to make some sectarian capital out of the Welsh Disestablishment controversy by introducing the spectre of rapacious Catholicism: "What else could they call it but degradation for the nation when the disendowment of Christianity in Wales ... should be carried out by the slavish and bought votes of Roman Catholic Irishmen? (Loud Cheers.)'[18]

If Glasgow was considered more sympathetic to the Ulster Unionists then there were still other areas which were not as receptive to their crusade, and Manchester was one such place. If Liberalism, Free-Trade, and Dissenting Christianity distinguished the Manchester 'men' from the High Church Tory 'gentlemen' from Liverpool, then it necessarily followed that Cottonopolis was less receptive to militant anti-Catholicism and Orangeism that its great rival.[19] That notwithstanding, the strength of popular Conservatism in Manchester has been noted by a number of historians,[20] and the city's

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[14] *Irish Times*, 25 January 1913
[15] *Times*, 25 January 1913
[16] Stewart, *Ulster Crisis*, p. 93
[17] 'Glasgow and Lanarkshire were models of Conservative organisation in Scotland', see D. W. Urwin, 'Politics and the development of the Unionist Party in Scotland' (unpublished MA thesis, Manchester, 1963), p. 117; *Glasgow Evening Times*, 30 January 1913
[18] *Glasgow Herald*, 31 January 1913
[19] Lowe, *Lancashire*, p. 163; R. B. Walker, 'Religious Changes in Liverpool in the Nineteenth Century', Journal of Ecclesiastical History, 19 (1968) p. 195
[20] See for example A. Kidd, *Manchester* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996), pp. 171-4; J. Walton, *Lancashire: A Social History, 1558-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), p.p. 259-63; P. Joyce, *Work, Society, and Politics The Culture of the factory in late Victorian England* (Brighton, 1980), ch. 7

large Irish community was crucial to their appeal.[21] (It also important to note that the city was the birthplace of the English Orange Order).[22] Yet the perceived abandonment of Free Trade by the Conservatives had cost the Party dear in parliamentary elections - but the continued Tory dominance of the city council has been explained thus: 'without the albatross of tariff reform, Conservatives in municipal politics returned to the ascendant.'[23] To be sure, Carson spoke in the city on a number of occasions in our period, and Law spoke in Cottonopolis in March,[24] but the anti-Home Rule meetings held there never rivalled the sort of set piece extravaganzas that occurred in other northern cities (although Walter Long detected considerable anti-Home Rule sentiment in the city as early as March 1912).[25]

The Unionist agent in Lancashire, John Boraston, received a letter in May 1913 informing him of a certain disinterest in the Irish question in parts of Lancashire and Cheshire. 'There is a general lack of interest in the Home Rule question' noted an anonymous correspondent, 'and although Home Rule may be claimed as being the paramount issue in the Altrincham election such a claim will not be in accordance with the facts.'[26] (Here his opinion diverged from that of the Unionist victor at Altrincham, C. C. Hamilton, who told the *Morning Post* that, from 'the outset of the campaign I placed opposition to Home Rule in the forefront of my programme.'[27] What is more, the voters of this Mancunian satellite town had voted for the Unionist candidate, and his 'Orange oratory'[28] despite being warned by the *Manchester Guardian* that, considering Hamilton's support for Ulster, 'he remains the candidate of disorder, and Wednesday's vote will be a vote for or against disorder as a regular method of action in politics.'[29] Hamilton retorted that he hoped that 'the Liberal organ is as proud of their answer as I am of the message of comfort and cheer they have sent to the loyalists of Ireland.')[30]

Boraston's correspondent was not convinced, even by Hamilton's success. He advised that, with regard to the proposed anti-Home Rule demonstrations, 'Manchester is not the most suitable starting point because opposition to Home Rule is naturally likely to be more alive in say Scotland or in the eastern counties or extreme western counties of England.' In other words, Manchester might jump onto the pro-union bandwagon, but it

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[21] Mervyn Busteed, 'Little Islands of Erin: Irish Settlement and Identity in Mid-Nineteenth Century Manchester', MacRaild, ed., *The Great Famine and Beyond: Irish Migrants in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Dublin: Irish Academic, 2000), pp. 94-127; Mervyn Busteed, 'Identities in Transition: Irish Migrants in Mid-Victorian Manchester', D. George Boyce and Roger Swift, eds, *Problems and Perspectives in Irish History since 1800* (Dublin: Irish Academic, 2004), pp. 80-94

[22] Frank Neal, 'Manchester Origins of the English Orange Order', *Manchester Region History Review*, 4 (1990-1)

[23] Tony Adams, 'Labour Vanguard, Tory Bastion, or the Triumph of New Liberalism? Manchester politics 1900 to 1914 in comparative perspective', *Manchester Region History Review*, 2 (2000), p. 28

[24] Lord Derby hoped that it would be 'a bumper meeting', see: letter from the Earl of Derby to Andrew Bonar Law, 7 March 1913, BLP, 29/2/9.

[25] Letter from Walter Long to Andrew Bonar Law, March 1912. HLRO, BLP 26/1/76

[26] Anonymous letter to John Boraston, undated [probably May 1913]. LRO, 920 DER (17) 17/8

[27] *Morning Post*, 29 May 1913

[28] *Rochdale Observer*, 28 May 1913

[29] *Manchester Guardian*, 23 May 1913

[30] *Morning Post*, 29 May 1913

would be best to try and build momentum elsewhere. 'If a beginning could be made in Glasgow or some other place where feeling would be naturally stronger on the question they think that the chance of a successful demonstration in Manchester would be greater.'[31] It seems that this recommendation was broadly accepted in the county. Lord Derby received another communication from a Lancashire Unionist agent urging him to postpone any large meetings in the city from the summer to November (when the Home Rule Bill would get its second reading),[32] and this is precisely what happened. For Carson only came to Manchester in December, *after* his triumphal summer and autumn tours.

The Unionists also encountered some problems in parts of rural Britain. In January of 1913 the Earl of Iveagh had written to Carson explaining their predicament in East Anglia, with particular regard to Tariff Reform. 'The agricultural labourer is already seriously affected by recent rises in the cost of living' wrote Iveagh, 'and is less than ever in a position to take risks.'[33] The nub of Iveagh's missive was that the spectre of the 'dear loaf' was repulsing potential supporters, but whether a hard line on Home Rule would attract them is another matter. Reporting from the Newmarket by-election in May, the *Times* had noted that the chances of 'Sir Edward Carson's plea for Ulster' detracting votes from the Liberal candidate were doubtful.

> Ireland is a far country from these quiet Cambridgeshire villages ... indeed the invariable ignorance of many of them of the state of affairs in Ulster, and the professed indifference of others to the consequence of Home Rule are the despair of the two ladies who have come over from Ulster to canvass the division.[34]

Propagandists from both sides of the Irish divide had descended on the Fens to appeal for support, and the Union Defence League noted with pleasure how Pat White, an Irish Nationalist MP, had sent an ultimately premature telegram to his colleagues describing the success of their mission. 'Home Rule workers detained at Newmarket election fighting imported Tories from Ireland. Send greetings. Another victory in sight.'[35] White had been too hasty: the Unionists actually took the seat. However, even the pro-Unionist *Times* thought that the unpopularity of the Insurance Act, and not Home Rule, had been 'chiefly responsible for this surprise election.'[36]Yet there were signs that British opposition to Home Rule was finally beginning to stir.

In late March the British League for the Support of Ulster and the Union (BLSUU) announced their formation and published an appeal for support in the national press, which read: 'We ... appeal to all British citizens who sympathise with Ulster, and who value their own freedom, to join the above League, which has been formed to support the

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[31] Anonymous Letter to John Boraston, undated (May 1913) LRO/920 DER (17) 17/8
[32] Letter from Robert Mathams (Conservative Central Office agent for Lancashire and Cheshire) to the Earl of Derby, 27 May 1913 LRO/920 DER (17) 17/8
[33] Letter from the Earl of Iveagh to Sir Edward Carson, 1 January 1913. PRONI/D/989/A/8/2/11/1
[34] *Times*, 14 May 1913
[35] *The HR Bill 1913: Memorandum on second reading June 1913* (Private and confidential UDL Memorandum) June 1913, pp. 25-26. PRONI/D/1507/A/4/5
[36] *Times*, 19 May 1913

men of Ulster in the great struggle that lies before them."[37] It quickly gained supporters, moving the *Globe* to declare that 'throughout the kingdom there are Englishmen, Scotsmen, and Welshmen who are ready to oppose the Government's scheme for granting Home Rule to Ireland by every means in their power.' Furthermore, the League had employed 'more than 150 agents in all parts of the country' a number of whom 'are stationed in Scotland and Wales, but the greater part [sic] are in England. Along the South Coast, in Berkshire and London, and in the West Country – round about Bristol and Bath – the response to the appeal has been particularly strong, and already many thousands of names have been enrolled.' They were particularly pleased with 'the number of sympathetic letters received from working men, who form a large proportion of the adherents.'[38] Indeed, a reporter from the *Daily Sketch* called at the League's West London offices and was told that

> We have been enrolling thousands of new members, and have got men in the ranks who represent all classes of the community. You would be astounded if you knew the number of peers who have stated their readiness to help. We have too, an enormous number of retired Army men who are enrolled – more than people would readily believe ... But what we like to see is the working men coming in. Every day sees a fresh batch. The funds are also doing well, and we have had many subscriptions ranging from £500 to sixpence-worth of stamps.[39]

The inauguration of organisations like the BLSUU points to renewed interest and enthusiasm among sections of the British public for the Unionist cause. This meant that the Liberal government was forced to fight on ground not of its own choosing. As one historian of the Party has noted 'its preoccupation with Irish and Welsh measures severely deflected it from the social policies previously outlined by Lloyd George, and in 1913-14 the tempo of social reform notably slackened.'[40] This was a development which palpably unsettled Liberal ministers who were forced to give uncomfortable public assurances on the subject of rebellious Ulster. Speaking at Bristol, the Irish Secretary, Augustine Birrell, was compelled to allay fears that the British Army were going to be forced into fratricidal conflict. 'Depend upon it', pleaded Birrell, 'the soldiers of the King won't be employed in mowing down the peaceful Protestants of Belfast.'[41] Birrell sounded more disconcerted at Warrington five days later, where he was forced to reiterate this point 'As for shooting them down, who intends to shoot them down? They say 'will the soldiers of the King march through Belfast and mow down with their horrible artillery the Protestants of Belfast? The answer is "No." ... We have no intention of doing it.'[42]

Note how the words like 'Protestant' were being mentioned more often than was usual. During the Altrincham by-election, Law had sent an exhorting public message to the voters of the borough, where it had featured prominently in his denunciation of the

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[37] *Daily Telegraph*, 27 March 1913
[38] *The Globe*, 9 June 1913
[39] *Daily Sketch*, 11 June 1913
[40] Kenneth O. Morgan, *The Age of Lloyd George: The Liberal Party and British Politics, 1890-1929* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1978), p. 50
[41] *Western Morning Press*, 12 February 1913
[42] *Manchester Guardian*, 17 February 1913.

government who, through their plans for Welsh disestablishment, planned 'against the will of the people as they well know, to despoil a Protestant Church [with] the aid of Nationalist votes.'[43] Law probably understood that whenever these tacit appeals to bigotry were made they served to jog the national memory that the defence of Protestantism had been the nation's mission since the Reformation. In this regard, his public pronouncements differed little from the extremists of the Protestant Alliance, who announced at their Annual Rally in May that the threat of 'Romanism in Ireland' would 'imperil the safety of Protestantism in Great Britain.'[44]

All this may now sound faintly absurd - and may well have done to a lot of people in 1913 too - yet the very fact that a serious politician like Law was adopting similar language reveals the durability of the old Orange drum in British politics. And it was not just the Unionist leader who appreciated this. In a memorandum circulated amongst the officers of the Union Defence League it was suggested that it would be useful to make it known in Britain that at a recent AOH dinner in Dublin 'the first toast was to the Pope (not the king it be noticed he was not toasted at all)'; and that the Reverend Gerald O'Nolan of St. Malachy's College Belfast, had lately exhorted his flock to 'resolve to know and cherish our faith ... which will act as an antidote to those poisonous Anglicising influences that make the present so deplorable.'[45]

In small-town Lancashire the heat of the Home Rule debate had caused the sort of sectarian tensions that had been commonplace throughout the county in the nineteenth century to rise to the surface.[46] Rochdale was famous as the home of Co-Operation, but that is not to say that all of its citizens were of a progressive persuasion. At the turn of the century Rochdale had 4,000 Primrose League members, and it is interesting that in the 1900 general election the local socialist candidate had accused the town's militant protestants of 'trying to raise sectarian dissensions over bigoted nonsense' with regard to ritualism.[47] The enduring sectarianism of Lancashire is well known; and, tellingly, one historian has noted how cotton towns like Rochdale 'had a sufficiently weak local economy, a large enough Catholic element, and a strong tradition of working class Conservatism, to embrace a close copy of Liverpool's abrasive Tory collectivism', and this was particularly true 'in and around Manchester.'[48] And although it was often the case that the Dissenting vote would go to the Liberals, it is significant that a nonconformist minister appeared on a Conservative platform in Rochdale in 1909.[49]

In framing its essentials for a prospective parliamentary candidate the local Unionist Party Committee revealed the enduring importance of religious creed in Lancashire politics. Their first requisite was that the candidate 'must be an aggressive anti-Home

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[43] *Times*, 26 May 1913
[44] *Times*, 5 May 1913
[45] *The Home Rule Bill 1913: Memorandum on second reading June 1913* (Private and confidential UDL Memorandum) June 1913, pp. 18-19. PRONI/D/1507/A/4/5
[46] W. J. Lowe, *The Irish in Mid-Victorian Lancashire: The Shaping of a Working Class Community* (New York: Bern, 1990), pp. 145-173
[47] Pugh, *Tories and the People*, p. 123; Clarke, Lancashire, p. 264
[48] Tanner, *Labour Party*, p. 131
[49] *Manchester Guardian*, 28 December 1909; *Manchester Courier*, 12 January 1910

Ruler', however in 1913 the Unionist contender for Rochdale, Nicholas Cockshutt, happened to be a Catholic, and they warned him that this might present a problem.

> The Committee cannot guarantee against [sectarianism]. It may come. If Mr [?] is sensitive, he must consider this. The religious aspect will influence the nonconformist mind. Feeling is especially strong in Rochdale in this respect. The nonconformist vote is essential to the next election.[50]

In 1896 Lord Rosebery had expressed to Gladstone that he was 'greatly impressed with the strong feeling manifested against the Irish by a large number of prominent Nonconformists' at Rochdale.[51] Cockshutt was described in a biography of a Liberal MP for Rochdale A. G. C. Harvey, as 'a popular Manchester barrister ... a Roman Catholic [who] received a certain measure of support from the Irish' in the December elections of 1910 where he had lost narrowly to Harvey.[52] But he was a principled man who resented the fact that his personal religious faith was a subject for discussion, and perhaps as a consequence of this, Cockshutt took an ambiguous line on Home Rule. In August 1912 he had written to the *Manchester Guardian* to 'disassociate himself' from Bonar Law's remarks at Blenheim.[53] This was a feeling expressed elsewhere by other committed Unionists at the time - an anonymous 'county magistrate' had written to the *Times* in August noting that 'it is lamentable that the Conservative Party should be dragged further to perdition by a pack of truculent and intolerant Orangemen'[54] – but such open dissention caused the Unionist candidate serious difficulties in Rochdale.

'Cockshutt of Rochdale who takes umbrage at your Blenheim speech is a Catholic', wrote Lord Balcarres to Bonar Law, 'and he has been shaky about Home Rule for months.'[55] Cockshutt was shaken enough to write to Lord Derby to express his own concerns, and enclosed a letter that he intended to publish in the press. He was horrified that Law's Blenheim pledge had jeopardised 'the traditions of this great Party ... respect for law and order [and] one of its great treasures – obedience to our laws and opposition to anarchy.' What is more, he found the introduction of sectarianism profoundly distasteful 'In places other than in Rochdale, and by prominent and responsible Conservatives, solely in order to create a political zeal against Home Rule, religious hatred has been dragged in.'[56]

Lord Derby, whose writ ran right across Lancashire, soon became involved. In a discursive letter to the local Party Chairman, Walter Pilling, Derby warned him that if the candidate was deselected Cockshutt would claim that this was because he was 'was

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[50] Untitled document, undated (1913) Derby Papers (unsorted) LRO 920 DER (17) 17/9
[51] D.W. Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience: Chapel and Politics, 1870-1914* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1982), p. 103
[52] Francis Wigley Hirst, *Alexander Gordon Cummins Harvey: A Memoir* (London: Cobden Sanderson, 1925), p. 81
[53] *Manchester Guardian*, 12 August 1912
[54] *Times*, 20 August 1912
[55] Letter from the Earl of Balcarres to Andrew Bonar Law, 14 August 1912, HLRO, BL 27/1/38
[56] Letter from Nicholas Cockshutt to the Earl of Derby, 20 January 1913 Derby Papers (unsorted) LRO 920 DER (17) 17/9

Roman Catholic and for no other reason.' Derby had interviewed Cockshutt, and had put it to him whether in the event of some irresponsible speaker going down and abusing Catholics and the Pope and saying that he thought they would bring in Rome Rule, what his action would be and he told me that if a question was asked by anybody after if he agreed with the speaker he would have to say "No."' Derby proposed two alternative courses of action:

1. Let him go, stating that his views on Home Rule were unacceptable, with the result that he would say it was because he was Roman Catholic and you will therefore lose the RC vote; or

2. See him again. Bind him down in any way you like on the Home Rule question ... but at the same time you pledge yourself to endeavour to keep the religious side of the controversy out of the matter as far as possible and warning speakers who may speak in his presence that he is a Roman Catholic.[57]

This last piece of advice clearly reveals how sectarian bigotry had re-emerged into British political discourse by 1913, suggesting as it does that Unionist stump speakers were prone to anti-Catholic outbursts. Whether the committee followed Derby's recommendations is unknown, and the chilly relationship between them and their candidate continued. After a speech given by Cockshutt, Pilling wrote him a letter expressing the committee's disquiet that his speech 'sounded sympathetic to Home Rule.' Furthermore, they required him to withdraw an allegation made by Cockshutt that they were intolerant of his religion, assuring him that 'there is no prejudice against your religion in the Party.'[58] Cockshutt was unhappy because he believed that the tenor of the Home Rule debate disproved Pilling's assertion. He forlornly urged to his colleagues to 'let religious freedom and toleration contribute to our victory', and with just a hint of bitterness he assured them of his hope 'that my inability to seek political support for stirring up sectarian strife will not stand in the way of my continuing as your candidate.'[59] Being suspicious of the motives behind opposition to Home Rule, Cockshutt had declined the opportunity of convening an anti-Home Rule meeting in the town, because, as he explained to Lord Derby, 'with regard to the nature of the constituency it was unwise to have one';[60] and in another letter to Pilling he stated he 'will oppose Home Rule providing there is no religious intolerance.'[61]

Such assurances were unforthcoming, and Cockshutt eventually resigned his candidacy. In a diplomatic interview with the *Rochdale Observer*, he was forthright in his disapproval of the 'the Constitutional Party' flirting with anarchy, but he was more

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[57] Letter from the Earl of Derby to Walter Pilling, 27 February 1913 [copy] Derby Papers (unsorted) LRO 920 DER (17) 17/9
[58] Letter from Walter Pilling to Nicholas Cockshutt, 12 March 1913 Derby Papers (unsorted) LRO 920 DER (17) 17/9
[59] Letter from Nicholas Cockshutt to Walter Pilling (Chairman of Rochdale Unionists) 12 March 1913 Derby Papers (unsorted) LRO, 920 DER (17) 17/9
[60] Letter from Nicholas Cockshutt to the Earl of Derby, 14 March 1913. LRO, 920 DER (17) 17/9 (unsorted)
[61] Letter from Nicholas Cockshutt to Walter Pilling, 17 March 1913 LRO, 920 DER (17) 17/9 (unsorted)

circumspect in his disapproval of his Party's lurch toward sectarianism which he described as a 'type or method of opposition to Home Rule of which the leaflet 'Oath of the Order of Hibernians' is an illustration.'[62] The *Catholic Herald* was less guarded. They believed that his resignation was the natural result of the 'alliance of the Unionist Party with the "No-Popery" propaganda of the Orange-men [which] has been looked upon as a scandal and has caused many Tory Catholics to turn from politics in disgust.'[63] It is important to note that Lord Derby subsequently explained to a prospective replacement that he would be likely to win if he stood, the reason that the Unionists had not previously carried the town was because they were 'handicapped' as 'our candidate at the last election [was] a Roman Catholic' and 'indeed I think his views on Home Rule are not those which commended themselves either to his constituency or indeed to Unionists generally.'[64] This got to the heart of the matter and exposed the primordial sectarianism of popular opposition in Britain to Irish Home Rule. Indeed, even Bonar Law himself admitted as much to Asquith during their clandestine talks of late 1913

> I told him [Asquith] that in my opinion, at bottom one of the strongest feelings in England and Scotland was Protestantism, or dislike of Roman Catholicism, and that if Protestants of Belfast were actually killed, then in my belief, the effect in Great Britain would be not only that the government would be beaten but that they would be snowed under.[65]

One historian has played down British sectarianism, claiming that in this passage Law was 'being overly simplistic' and cites A. V. Dicey's reservations.[66] However, in contrast to Dicey's career in an Oxbridge Ivory Tower, Law had years of experience campaigning in the rough-house cities of Scotland and the North – Glasgow, Manchester, and Liverpool. Before Law was selected to contest Bootle in 1911, a local MP wrote to Lord Derby that considering the 'Protestant v Catholic' feeling in the constituency, it would be as well to 'find out how Bonar Law voted on the Church discipline Bill? If he voted against it I am sure we might have difficulty, if for it or abstained I think we should be quite safe.'[67]

Therefore to claim that 'support in Britain for Ulster Unionism was not quite as strong as Law and Carson wished to think' because there were reservations about Law's fundamentalism emanating from some quarters of academe or Fleet Street, may be an accurate reflection of the opinion of some elite *bien pensants*, but it would tell us very little about British public opinion outside of the metropolis (although it must be said that Liverpool was probably the most sectarian place in England). Nevertheless, when they

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[62] *Rochdale Observer*, 24 May 1913
[63] *Catholic Herald*, 23 May 1913. The paper also advised its readers not to support the Unionist position as 'resistance "by any means" to the laws of the state ... is sinful according to the laws of the Catholic Church.'
[64] Letter from the Earl of Derby to Thomas Gibson Bowles, 13 Dec 1913 [Copy] LRO, 920 DER (17) 17/9 (unsorted). Bowles was inclined to agree that a win on Home Rule was likely, see copy of letter from him to the Earl of Derby, 2 January 1914. HLRO, BL/31/2/14.
[65] Letter from Andrew Bonar Law to Arthur Balfour, 15 October 1913 HLRO, BL/33/6/80
[66] Loughlin, *Ulster Unionism*, p. 67
[67] Letter from E. Goulding, M.P., to the Earl of Derby 23 February 1911, LRO, 920 DER (17) 6 (Unsorted)

ventured away from the capital, Unionist demagogues like Carson found that they were enormously popular, particularly in 1913 when he starred in perhaps the last great political tour in British history.

II

The second reading of the Home Rule Bill had commenced in May of 1913, and by early June, Carson, frustrated by the adverse arithmetic of the House of Commons, decided that a grand gesture was required. 'Our duty', he announced to the chamber, 'is not here: our duty is to help our own people to organise and also to ask those people of Great Britain who would never be a Party to your wretched, miserable, and scandalous betrayal to organise for our assistance.'[68] In Liverpool it seems that the local Unionists were prepared for the worst, with a *Courier* editorial asking whether the Prime Minister supposes 'that Liverpool would stand idle while her brothers were being shot down? Does he suppose that he can close our ports and search our ships?'[69] As the formation of the UVF testifies, the Ulster Unionists often displayed a dangerous impatience with the niceties of parliamentary democracy, and it was reported in the press that Carson had claimed that the proceedings in the House of Commons had become 'a pantomime and a farce.' Therefore, it was claimed, 'the Ulstermen have chosen a "direct appeal to the people."'[70] This they did: within hours of the conclusion of the debate all eighteen Irish Unionist members were aboard a train bound for Scotland.

Carson's progress along the west coast mainline to Glasgow meant that he passed through a number of English railway towns, and at each one he was forced to make impromptu speeches. At Rugby he was met by a cheering throng of supporters who presented him with an address, to which he replied 'while it is impossible for to make remonstrance [in parliament] we are going to appeal on behalf of the democracy of Ireland to the democracy of Great Britain.' This was met with 'a cheer which threatened to lift the station roof', which 'told him that the appeal would not be in vain.'[71] And as his train pulled away the crowd sang 'Auld Lang Syne' and the National Anthem. At Crewe another large crowd awaited. The train stopped briefly and Carson wryly addressed them from the door of the carriage: 'I am told that the people are very apathetic upon this question of Home Rule (shouts of "No.").'[72]

His next stop was the Citadel Station in Carlisle, where his reception was even more melodramatic. He was welcomed by a deputation from the local Unionist Association who, as custom seemed to dictate presented him with an address which wished him 'every success in their efforts to keep intact the integrity of the British Empire'[73] The stationmaster had received instructions from the LNW Railway Company to prevent overcrowding 'and the gates were closed against several hundreds of townspeople.' Not

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[68] Colvin, *Carson*, p. 188
[69] *Liverpool Courier*, 9 June 1913
[70] *Daily Telegraph*, 12 June 1913
[71] *Standard*, 12 June 1913
[72] *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 12 June 1913
[73] *Carlisle Journal*, 14 June 1913

to be thwarted 'a large number of persons of both sexes purchased short journey tickets at the booking office to gain access to the platform.'[74] Their ingenuity paid off, as they were able to hear Carson's ruminations on his journey thus far

> The reception which we have received at each of the stations at which this train has stopped, and the splendid reception that you have given us here, leads us to believe that what we were told in the House of Commons is untrue, when they say that the people of this country were against us, and that they were going to drive us out of our citizenship in the United Kingdom.[75]

The train was only in the station for 10 minutes, and left at 4 o'clock, five minutes late. During his stay a number of admirers shook hands with Carson, Rule Britannia was sung, and cheers were given were for 'Sir Edward Carson and the stalwarts behind him.' As the train left there were shouts of 'goodbye Sir Edward God bless you.' One parting cry was 'never give way' to which Carson replied 'no never.'[76] This sort of adulation was extraordinary. For the gentlemen of the press, the comparisons with the heady days of the 1870s sprang immediately to mind. 'There seems to be no absolute parallel to the tour upon which they have entered', reported the *Times*. 'The stirring scenes witnessed at each of the stations at which the train bearing the Party stopped recalled to older political observers the memories of Mr Gladstone's Midlothian campaign.'[77] The Unionist *Standard* simply noted that '[i]t was indeed a triumphal progress,'[78] though the Liberal leaning *Daily Record* thought this sort of 'fanatical Orangeism' opens up 'a vista of anxious days for the democracy of the United Kingdom.'[79] The Socialist *Daily Herald* thought that their 'appeals to racial and theological bigotry [are] the base and crafty expedients of the master-class and its minions.'[80] Yet this appeal was still to reach its crescendo.

Though the support of Tory Liverpool could be taken for granted, Glasgow's Orange sympathies were often obscured by the city's 'dominant reform tradition.'[81] Yet, Glasgow was perhaps the obvious destination for the Carson Express. 'It is natural that the Ulster Protestants, half of whom are Presbyterians of Scottish extraction, should come first to Presbyterian Scotland', editorialised the *Glasgow Herald*.[82] The Glasgow *Evening Times* thought that 'the traditions of the Scottish people must inspire with the utmost sympathy with their kinsmen on the other side of the North Channel.'[83] For although the Liberal Party dominated Scottish politics the dominant strain in its most influential city,

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[74] *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 12 June 1913
[75] *Carlisle Journal*, 14 June 1913
[76] *Carlisle Journal*, 14 June 1913
[77] *Times*, 12 June 1913
[78] *Standard*, 12 June 1913
[79] *Daily Record and Mail*, 13 June 1913
[80] They also bemoaned the fact that Jim Larkin was in gaol while Carson was still at large, see *Daily Herald*, 12 June 1913
[81] John F. McCaffrey, 'Political issues and developments', W. Hamish Fraser and Irene Maver, eds, *Glasgow, Volume II: 1830-1912* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 216
[82] *Glasgow Herald*, 12 June 1913
[83] [Glasgow] *Evening Times*, 12 June 1913

Glasgow, was until 1914 Liberal-Unionist.[84] Some have argued that this was because the birth of this new political 'third way' provided 'a welcome stepping stone to the Right for so many well-heeled Scots, for whom Conservatism was still a step too far'.[85]

There were several other threads to Glasgow's hostility to the disintegration of the Union. Glasgow had a strongly religious working class; and Glaswegian business had many contacts with their counterparts in Belfast - something that comforted and gave confidence to the Unionists of Ulster.[86] James Ferguson's *The Scot in Ulster*, published in 1888, did much to emphasise the common cultural, ethnic, and religious links between Scotland and the province. And although one author has argued that there 'was little evidence of a popular response to this idea in Scotland'[87] this would underestimate the reaction there to the Home Rule crisis of 1911 to 1914.

In 1886 the proprietor of the *Belfast News-Letter*, James Henderson, stated: 'It is greatly desired that we should stir up the feeling of Scotland in favour of this movement ... I believe that if we can stir up religious feeling in Scotland we have won the battle.'[88] Seventeen years later Scotland could still be stirred. In 1913 H. J. MacKinder - Oxford Geographer, Glasgow Unionist MP, and staunch advocate of Imperialism - voiced the concerns of many of his countrymen when he denounced Home Rule, claiming that they would be dangerous for the integrity of the United Kingdom and Scottish prosperity.[89] In 1903 Joseph Chamberlain had deliberately chosen Glasgow as the place to begin his own campaign to save the British Empire through Tariff Reform.[90] Dependence upon imperial markets may have fostered allegiance to Empire on Clydeside, and popular imperialism still retained enormous purchase at least up till 1914, and in slightly diluted terms until the end of the thirties.[91] The city's most famous theatre was, of course 'The Glasgow Empire'; and no other British city outside London had such a successful series of major Imperial exhibitions as those of 1888, 1901, 1911 and 1938 - all powerfully emphasising the imperial connections of the city.[92] Yet some Scottish historians have been reticent about this Imperial inheritance, perhaps because of Scotland's, and particularly Glasgow's, radical social history which led to a desire to distance socialism from imperialism. Nevertheless, even ardent Glaswegian Socialists such a James Maxton would not have recognised this division, and he even praised the Scots contribution to the Empire in the House of Commons in 1920.[93]

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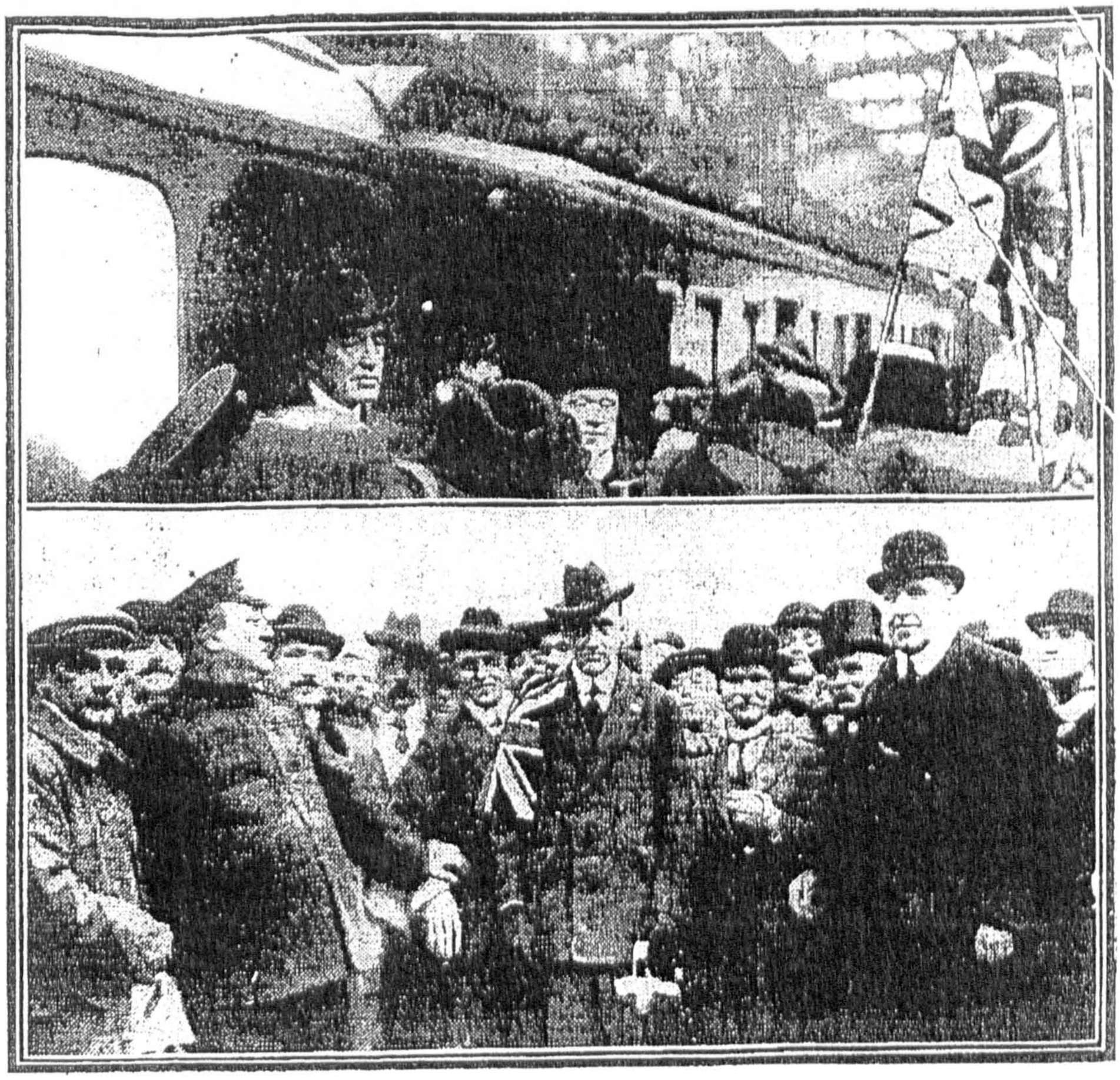
[84] MacKenzie, 'Second City', p. 231
[85] W. Hamish Fraser, review of R. A. Houston and W. W. J. Knox (eds), *The New Penguin History of Scotland* at http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/paper/fraserH.html
[86] See Elaine, MacFarland, *Protestants First: Orangeism in nineteenth century Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), P. Hillis, 'Presbyterianism and social class in mid nineteenth century Glasgow', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 32 (1981).
[87] Murray G. H. Pittock, *Scottish Nationality* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 101
[88] H. Kearney, *The British Isles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 186
[89] Finlay, 'Popular Imperialism', p. 18.
[90] C. W. Hill, *Edwardian Scotland* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic, 1976), p. 76.
[91] Richard J. Finlay, 'The rise and fall of popular imperialism in Scotland, 1850-1950', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 115 (1999), p. 14
[92] Ibid. p. 226
[93] Finlay, 'Popular Imperialism', p. 17

Glasgow was therefore a propitious destination for the Ulstermen, and the city was undoubtedly excited. In the week before the arrival a large poster had been displayed

TIMES, THURSDAY, JUNE 12th 1913.

SIR EDWARD CARSON'S ARRIVAL IN GLASGOW.



(1) Sir Edward leaving the train at the Central Station. (2) On his way to the hotel, carrying his famous blackthorn and a silver horseshoe which was presented to him by a well-wisher on his arrival. A supporter has the Union flag draped over Sir Edward's shoulder.

8. Carson arrives in Glasgow, see [Glasgow] *Evening Times*, 12 June 1913

throughout the city with a map of Ulster depicted wrapped in a union flag, with an appeal not be 'left to stand alone' signed by Edward Carson.[94] This gravely offended the *Glasgow Observer and Catholic Herald* who thought it 'a lying picture' and objected to the depiction of the 'grimy claws of Nationalists in Ireland', wielding 'bludgeons and

[94] *Newcastle Journal*, 12 June 1913

blackthorns.'[95] Their train arrived at 6.15 in the still light evening where it was met by about 500 of the leading Unionists of the west of Scotland: including the Reverend Dr Ness, Grand Master, and James Rice, Secretary, of the Grand Orange Lodge of Scotland.[96] A large crowd was permitted onto the platform,[97] 'many of whom wore red, white, and blue badges, with the words "Support Loyal Ulster."'[98] and Carson had to wait for some minutes for the cheers to die down before he could declare "Our watchword now in Ulster is the Covenant, and you will help us," the press reported that 'like a roar of artillery came the answer "we will" shouted by thousands of throats.' They were to stay in a hotel near the station, and the Ulster contingent procession was insulated by a cheering, flag-waving crowd eager to shake their hands (one well-wisher presented Carson with a silver horseshoe)[99] and as they passed 'the crowd bared their heads and sang the National Anthem.'[100]

The following day, Carson spoke at a lunch at the Glasgow Constitutional Club, where a local MP, Robert Thompson, somewhat bizarrely expressed his grim fear 'that the streets of Glasgow would soon be dyed with human blood' if Ulster were coerced.[101] In the evening came 'the turn of the democracy' to express their support for Ulster. The whole of the Irish Unionist parliamentary Party was ascended the platform in the St Andrew's Hall and 'no sooner had they taken their places under the swelling folds of a gigantic Union Jack than the audience rising to their feet, broke into unrestrained cheering, which continued round after round, and the audience were only brought to silence by the solemn tones of the great organ.'[102] The 'Arthur Balfour Choir' then sang a popular selection including 'Arise Ye Ulster', and 'Ulster' by Kipling - set to the tune of the British Grenadiers.[103] Then the predominantly male audience, numbering between 5,000 and 6,000 broke into the reverent singing of Ulster's anthem 'O God our Help in Ages Past.'

As we have seen, the Unionists demanded - and received - decorum from their supporters, and the sombre tone of Ulster's protest was often commented upon. The atmosphere at Glasgow, noted an impressed London *Times* reporter, 'can change in a moment from the tumult of the forum to the solemnity of the sanctuary.'[104] Of all the scenes in side the Hall, 'most memorable of all', claimed the *Evening Times*, 'was the scene when Sir Edward Carson and his colleagues marched onto the platform and faced a forest of waving flags, Union Jacks, great and small, while cheers after cheer uprose [sic] from the assemblage.'[105] Carson, 'always a lucid speaker'[106], spoke with some passion. He openly taunted the Scottish Lord Advocate on his own patch who had accused the

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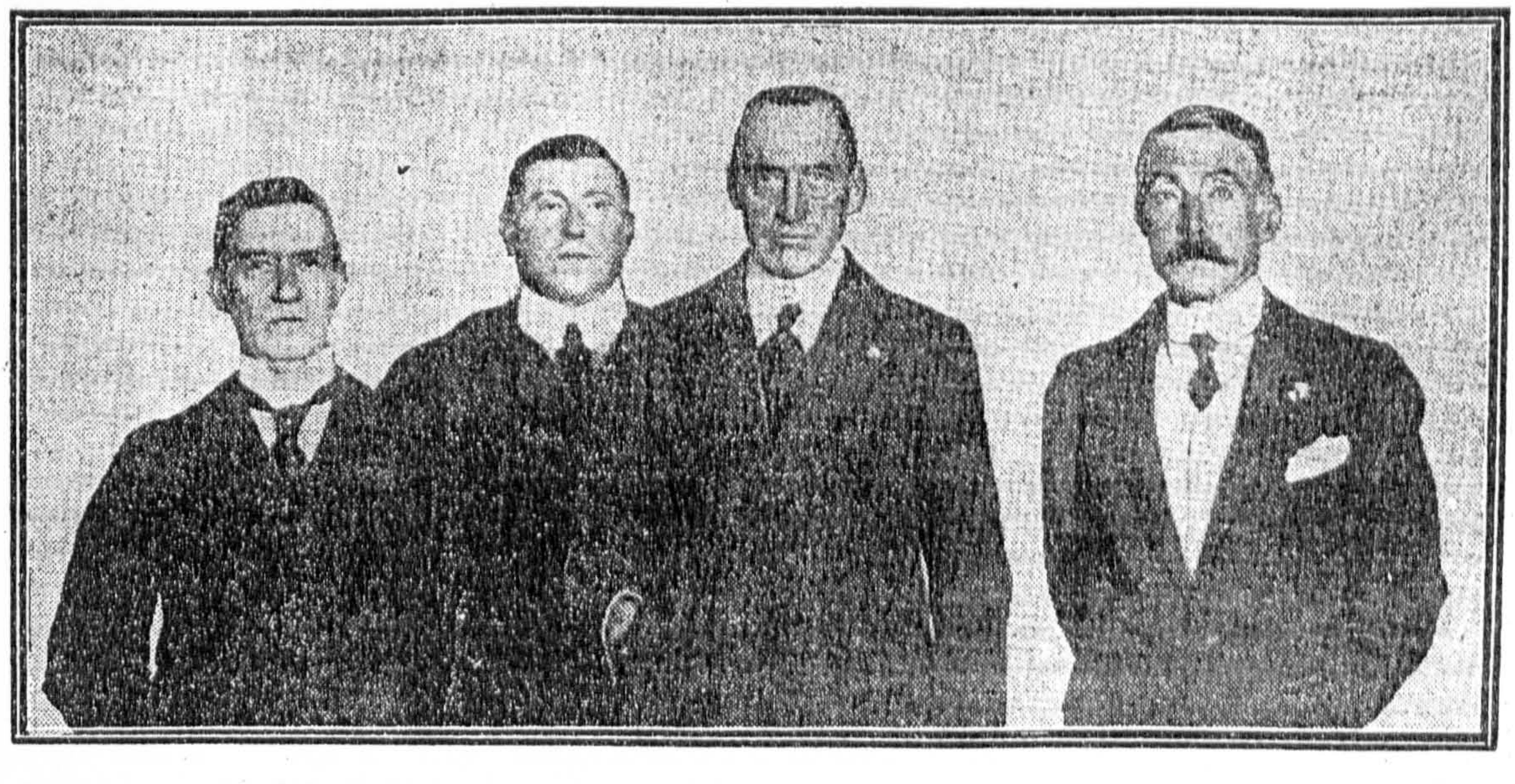
[95] *Glasgow Observer and Catholic Herald*, 14 June 1913
[96] *Glasgow Herald*, 12 June 1913
[97] [Glasgow] *Evening Citizen*, 12 June 1913
[98] *Glasgow News*, 12 June 1913
[99] [Glasgow] *Evening Times*, 12 June 1913
[100] *Standard*, 12 June 1913
[101] *Newcastle Journal*, 13 June 1913
[102] *Times*, 13 June 1913
[103] *Newcastle Journal*, 13 June 1913
[104] *Times*, 13 June 1913
[105] [Glasgow] *Evening Times*, 13 June 1913
[106] *Glasgow Herald*, 13 June 1913

Ulster Unionists of being 'law breakers and rowdies', by advising his 'fellow-countrymen to keep on to the end - even if it comes to the necessity of using violence', goading him to prosecute him rather than any of his followers. At this 'he thumped the table at his side, and the audience rose in a body and cheered him for some time.'[107]

DAILY RECORD AND MAIL, THURSDAY, JUNE

ARRIVAL OF SIR EDWARD CARSON IN GLASGOW.



Mr. Scott Dickson, K.C., M.P., Mr. James Adam (son of Lord Adam), Sir Edward Carson, K.C., M.P., and Mr. J. H. Campbell photographed on their arrival last night at the Central Station, Glasgow. They open their final crusade against the Home Rule Bill in Glasgow to-night, and proceed afterwards to Edinburgh. ("Daily Record.")

9. If looks could kill ... The Ulster Party pose for their picture in Glasgow. *Daily Record*, 12 June 1913.

Due to the demand for tickets Carson had to address a further 2,000 people at an overflow meeting in the nearby Berkeley Hall. He then climbed aboard a waiting carriage to take part in a grand procession to the Conservative Club – and the contrast between the churchy ambience inside St Andrew's Hall and the rumbustiousness of the ensuing parades was striking. After the singing of the national anthem the crowd flocked to the street, where '15,000 Orangemen [headed by two bands] were marshalled in processional order,'[108] spectacularly led by Orange Grand Marshall Miller and Assistant Grand Marshall Hutton 'each mounted on a Grey Horse'[109] - like King Billy at the Boyne. Though the route was comparatively short 'so great was the pressure that it took three quarters of an hour to traverse the distance.'[110] When Carson and company reached the Club he had to 'submit to a more personal form of demonstration' as a number of supporters 'raised him onto their shoulders and carried him into the hall of the club.'[111]

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[107] [Glasgow] *Evening Times*, 13 June 1913
[108] *Times*, 13 June 1913
[109] [Glasgow] *Evening Times*, 13 June 1913
[110] *Newcastle Journal*, 13 June 1913
[111] [Glasgow] *Evening Times*, 13 June 1913

The size of the demonstration was significant; the *Herald* thought this revealed the 'extraordinary fervency of the West of Scotland.'[112] We should do well not to forget this side of Scottish politics. For example, although the anti-Boer war movement in Scotland has received much historical attention, we should remember that it was formed 'in *response* to the overwhelming support for military action in Scotland.'[113] This tallies with the observation made by Alexander McCallum Scott, an Edwardian Liberal MP, in his diary that he faced a challenge caused by the pro-union sentiment in his own working class constituency of Glasgow Bridgeton, where 'organisations like the Junior Imperialist League were strong and, in conjunction with the Orange Order, they agitated on the Irish issue and depicted the Liberals as enemies of empire.'[114]

As was typical, the Unionist press was delighted with the scale of the protest and indeed how natural that protest seemed. 'The feature of the welcome everywhere is being given is the spontaneity', noted the *Standard*. 'Stage management counts for nothing in it. The organised deputations play only a part in the function. The big public is the chief performer.'[115] The *Daily Telegraph* reported 'the wonderful *orderly* parade of Ireland's Scottish friends in Glasgow's streets.'[116] This obsession with order may well be explained by one historian of the Edwardian press who has written that for Edwardians mobs and crowds were signs of social decay, whereas the soldier was seen 'to represent an antidote to degeneration and decadence, as the way in which society could avoid *over*-civilization through the possession and display of martial virtues.[117]

The *Glasgow News* thought that the demonstrations 'rather negative the idea [sic] that there is public apathy over this grave matter.'[118] The *Herald* noted simply that 'her cause is our cause.'[119] As we shall see, Carson's dramatic reception in Glasgow in June 1913 must have been as big a fillip to the moral of the Ulster Unionists as the formation of the UVF itself.[120] But then the support of Glasgow was coveted by Nationalists as well as Unionists. On the same day as Carson's visit the local Catholic press advertised 'IRELAND'S APPEAL', the forthcoming visit of the Irish Nationalist MPs John Redmond and Joe Devlin to speak at the St Andrew's Hall, which was to be followed at 9.15pm by a 'procession and demonstration.'[121] In the event the parade from the Hall to

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[112] *Glasgow Herald*, 13 June 1913
[113] Richard J. Finlay, 'Continuity and Change: Scottish Politics, 1900-45', T. M. Devine and R. J. Finlay, eds, *Scotland in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), pp. 64-7
[114] Graham Walker and Tom Gallagher, 'Protestantism and Scottish Politics', Graham Walker and Tom Gallagher, eds, *Sermons and Battle Hymns: Protestant Popular culture in Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), p. 87
[115] *Standard*, 14 June 1913
[116] *Daily Telegraph*, 14 June 1913
[117] Glenn R. Wilkinson, *Depictions and Images of War in Edwardian Newspapers, 1899-1914* (Basingstoke Palgrave, 2003), p. 40
[118] *Glasgow News*, 13 June 1913
[119] *Glasgow Herald*, 13 June 1913
[120] Incidentally it during this visit to Glasgow that the fanatical Major Fred Crawford first proposed a major gun-running coup to James Craig, see Stewart, *Ulster Crisis*, p. 96
[121] *Glasgow Observer and Catholic Herald*, 14 June 1913

the Liberal Club along Buchanan Street was enormous, numbering between 20 and 30,000.[122]

The following day Carson boarded a train for the Scottish capital where a similar reception and rally was planned. At Holytoun, an intermediate station between Glasgow and Edinburgh, the train was thronged by a 'crowd of working men ... some with children in their arms.' Evidently many of these men hailed from the North of Ireland and several of the Ulster members were quick to recognise former constituents, from whom they learned that '500 workmen in that locality alone had signed the Covenant without persuasion of any kind.'[123] (As we have seen, the smaller single-industry towns that ringed Glasgow such as Coatbridge, Motherwell, and Airdrie often witnessed more Orange activity than Glasgow itself.)[124]

When Carson's train arrived in Edinburgh he was met at the station by a large crowd as well as representatives of local Unionist organisations, with the *Newcastle Journal* observing that 'the welcome, though somewhat more restrained than given in the sister city, lacked noting in cordiality, most of them carried either Union jacks or hankies in the Imperial colours.'[125] Carson milked his audience as he progressed through the station, surrounded as he was by crowds 'whose sympathies are in accord with the purpose of the present campaign.' The *Scotsman* noted, somewhat naively, that 'twice Sir Edward courteously halted to allow press photographers to take a snapshot.'[126] Nothing courteous about it, Carson, and the rest of the Ulster 'image builders', were calculated publicists, alive to the potential of modern media.[127] Indeed, in a sardonic piece in the *Edinburgh Evening News*, 'Liberal Worker' commented that 'as money is no object in this campaign – a whole troop of journalists are believed to be tacked on free of expense to the Ulster pilgrims.'[128]

The main event was the meeting scheduled to take place in the Synod Hall that night, and the Ulster press reported that the auditorium could hold 3,500 though 'the tickets had been applied for 3 or 4 times over, people arrived 3 hours early and had to be marshalled into queues by the police.'[129] Inside the Hall, 'the flag of the Union hung in front of the galleries, and flanked a representation of Ulster's appeal to the British public - a female figure wrapped in the Union Jack with arms outstretched in the attitude of entreaty',[130] and 'the tedium of waiting was relieved by the singing of pieces by the Primrose League and the Unionist Choir.' The amount of women present was also noted.[131] Carson was accompanied into the Hall by 'stalwart pipers playing 'the Campbells are coming', and, as usual, 'For he's a jolly good fellow', 'Rule Britannia', and 'O God our help in ages

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[122] *Glasgow Herald*, 17 June 1913
[123] *Scotsman*, 14 June 1913
[124] Smith, 'Class, skill, and sectarianism', p. 192
[125] *Newcastle Journal*, 14 June 1913
[126] *Scotsman*, 14 June 1913
[127] Alvin Jackson, 'Unionist Myths, 1912-85', *Past and Present* , 134 (1992), p. 171
[128] *Edinburgh Evening News*, 14 June 1913
[129] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 14 June 1913
[130] *Scotsman*, 14 June 1913
[131] *Edinburgh Evening News*, 14 June 1913

past.' In his opening remarks, the chairman of the meeting, a Mr Avon Clyde, revealed the widespread purchase of the idea of Union north of the border, when he referred to Scotland in a term that has long since fallen in to abeyance. 'I can assure our visitors', he began, 'that among the Scots of *North Britain*, the Scots of Ulster [have found] themselves at home among friends, whose sympathy was not limited to mere agreement but was practical and active (Cheers)' [emphasis added].[132]

Carson, claiming tiredness, had delegated the first speech to his fellow Dublin Unionist MP, the crusty lawyer J. H. Campbell. His speech was typically old fashioned as he revived 30 years-old anti-Liberal rhetoric. 'They are going to haul down the Union Jack without striking a blow, and they propose to leave the garrison to the tender mercies of their bitterest opponents', he began. 'That is well in accord with the traditions of their Party and their predecessors. They did the same at Khartoum. They tried to do the same at Majuba Hill – (cheers) – but we are not going to agree ... we are determined to keep the flag flying (prolonged cheers).'[133] (Though 'Liberal Worker' thought Campbell's speech was so dreary as to be reminiscent of 'the last speech of the condemned' and soon dissipated enthusiasm.)[134] Carson then gave a relatively brief speech, explaining that the 'the whole of this question was narrowed down to one of sentiment and, he was sorry to say, of religion', before culminating in the rallying cry that as the Irish Catholic clergy intended to ensure that Ireland under Home Rule would be governed on 'Catholic lines' then the Unionists would be justified in saying that 'we are not going to submit.'[135]

At the conclusion of the meeting, a hundred policemen lined the route from the Hall to the Caledonian Station Hotel, and a guard of honour consisting of several hundred members of the Unionist Worker's League and a band of pipers.[136] Somewhat peculiarly, the former Liberal Prime Minister, Lord Rosebery, just so happened to be in the vicinity and waited largely unnoticed at the entrance of the Hall. Some Unionist MPs invited him into the meeting, which he gracefully declined, saying that he was merely 'one of the crowd and wished to remain so for the rest of the evening',[137] ('Liberal Worker' has it that Rosebery glanced at 'the noisy mob, crossed the street, and moved eastwards along Prince's Street. He had had enough').[138] When Carson emerged he climbed into a waiting motor car, the bodyguard closed around him, and then 'the procession crept past the deep rows of cheering men and women who lined the streets', as well as those who peered out of upper windows and the top decks of tramcars. A crowd of 7,000 gathered outside the hotel, with the press claiming that 'the vast company seemed to throb with enthusiasm,' and although they clamoured for more speeches Carson declined, and they had to be satisfied with Campbell's promise that they would 'carry the fiery cross across the border.'[139]

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[132] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 14 June 1913
[133] *Glasgow Herald*, 14 June 1913
[134] *Edinburgh Evening News*, 14 June 1913
[135] [Glasgow] *Evening Times*, 14 June 1913
[136] *Scotsman*, 14 June 1913
[137] *Edinburgh Evening News*, 14 June 1913
[138] Ibid.
[139] *Scotsman*, 14 June 1913

As one historian has noted, 'there were many Scots with who felt an emotional sympathy with Unionist support for Ulster'; but, he also claims, 'Ireland was not now an issue which the weakened Unionists could use to win over large blocs of new voters.'[140] Considering Carson's reception in Glasgow and Edinburgh, as well as the by-elections won by the Unionists at Leith, Hamilton, and Wick - and the improved performance at Linlithgow, a result that caused serious consternation among Asquith's cabinet[141] - this is a contentious point.[142]

It has been contended that Ulster's appeal to religious fellow-feeling in Scotland was paying dividends after 1912.[143] On a national level, the Scottish tour would have been, for some in the Party, 'the beginning' in Glasgow that could influence the rest of the United Kingdom.[144] What is more, on the day of the Edinburgh demonstration the *Scotsman* published an anonymous letter which claimed that 'Thousands of Scotsmen have, like myself, been waiting impatiently for a lead to enrol their names among those who are ready to make personal sacrifices in support of Ulster.' He therefore urged those of a like mind that they would do well to copy a letter that he had written to the BLSUU and send it to their headquarters in London

> Dear Sir, - Referring to the notice in Unionist papers, I trust you will kindly add my name to the British League for the Support of Ulster. I enclose [a Postal Order for] £1 as my subscription, and wish I could make it more. I will give my active support to the League, and, when called upon, am prepared to proceed to Ulster with a rifle or revolver and ammunition, to maintain myself while there, and to submit to the discipline enforced by authorities of the League.[145]

After leaving Edinburgh Carson's train made its first stop at Berwick, Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey's constituency, a place where Grey himself recalled that the local Anglican clergy were usually against him but that 'the strong Presbyterian element in the border region was on his side.'[146] Nevertheless Carson told 'a large crowd' at Berwick Station that he only wished the wished the Foreign Secretary would devote as much time to Ulster as he did to Albania.[147] His train then skirted the Northumbrian coast before arriving at Newcastle where a similar reception took place. It is instructive to learn that at the opening ceremony of the new Wallsend Unionist Club on Tyneside later that day, the chairman, Mr Macaulay Robertson, had noted that 'the day was a happy one, because many of our members had had the pleasure of meeting Sir Edward Carson that day', but, he had reminded them that 'the movement was not an ordinary one in the political

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[140] Michael Fry, *Patronage and Principle: A Political History of Modern Scotland* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1991), p. 131

[141] Edward David, ed., *Inside Asquith's Cabinet: From the diaries of Charles Hobhouse* (London: John Murray, 1977), p. 148

[142] The UWUC sent 144 copies of 'Ulster's Appeal' to Linlithgow and 512 copies of 'Irish Freedom' to Wick for distribution during those by-elections, Urquhart, *Minutes*, p. 94

[143] Graham Walker, 'The Irish Presbyterian Home Rule Convention of 1912', *Studies*, 86 (1997), pp. 75-6

[144] Anonymous Letter to John Boraston, undated (May 1913) LRO, 920 DER (17) 17/8

[145] *Scotsman*, 14 June 1913

[146] G. M. Trevelyan, (London: Longman, 1937), pp. 24, 66

[147] *Berwick Advertiser*, 20 June 1913

sense.'[148] Many Unionists did think that the defence of the union was so evidently sensible as to transcend politics, but then so did many other groupings and the causes that they championed.

Poignantly, on the same day that the Unionist Party left the North East bound for Leeds, the body of the Suffragette martyr Emily Wilding Davidson arrived by rail in her native Northumberland. Such a counterpoise of Suffragism and Unionism is a vivid reminder of the political divisions in Edwardian society: encapsulating neatly the conflict between progress and tradition. This discord is further manifest by a cursory reading of the *Times* on that same weekend, as it also reported industrial disputes in Wales, violence accompanying a Catholic procession at Stamford Hill, and the 'many thousands [who] marched in procession in Bristol against the Welsh Church Bill.'[149]

After his brief stop at Newcastle, Carson agreed to address crowds at Darlington Station ('where he was persuaded to address a crowd from on top of a luggage cart' though his remarks 'were cut short by the peremptory blowing of a guard's whistle').[150] He also spoke at York, before arriving in Leeds. In choosing Leeds as a venue for a set-piece Unionist demonstration Carson was making a bold move, as the *Times* explained: 'in coming to the West Riding they were carrying their campaign into the heart of enemy territory. Leeds at the moment is represented by four Liberals and a Labour member.'[151] By and large, Industrial Yorkshire was staunchly Liberal and, as a consequence, 'the Home Rule issue had relatively little resonance' within the county. Indeed, neighbouring Bradford with its strong traditions of working class Unionism (provoked by 'a sizeable Irish population') would have been a more logical destination for the Ulstermen.[152] Thus, the rally at Leeds was not quite the festival of consensus that the demonstrations at Edinburgh and Glasgow had been; yet Carson's reception - choreographed, stylised, but, ultimately, enthusiastic - was nonetheless striking.

Carson and his Party drove in open carriages from their base at the Great Northern Hotel to the Leeds Town Hall for the first meeting, accompanied by around 200 members of the Leeds Junior Unionist Association who 'having formed a procession, headed by a brass band, marched before the carriage to the tunes of lively national airs.'[153] It was a Saturday afternoon. This meant that the streets of the city were crowded with curious onlookers - many of whom came equipped with Union Jacks. Upon reaching Victoria Square in the heart of the city the cavalcade encountered a hostile element comprised of some Socialist street-speakers who loudly denounced him. In a memorable scene, and amid cheers and counter-cheers, Carson calmly alighted and 'ascending the Town Hall

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[148] *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 16 June 1913
[149] *Times*, 16 June 1913. There were similarly large demonstrations against the disestablishment of the Welsh Church in 1913 at (among other places) Carlisle and Darlington, see *Carlisle Journal*, 25 July 1913, and *North Star*, 12 September, 1913.
[150] *Northern Echo*, 16 June 1913
[151] *Times*, 16 June 1913
[152] David Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party, 1888-1906* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), p. 176. Barnsley, Doncaster, Goole, Selby, Sheffield, and Huddersfield also had similar political traditions, Pugh, *Tories and the People*, p. 119
[153] *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 16 June 1913

steps, turned and stood facing the Socialist corner, in the direction of which, after a moment or two, he smilingly brandished his stick.'[154]

Leeds's imposing classical Town Hall was appropriately decorated in honour of Carson with 'the union Jack on various parts of the building gave a true national character to the assembly', above the platform a banner read 'Yorkshire welcomes Ulster's Unionist members', and '"Carson" was written with alliterative conspicuousness on shields adorning the pillars.'[155] The doors opened at 7 o'clock, and for an hour before the speech making began patriotic music was played old favourites 'The Boys of the Old Brigade' and 'Land of Hope and Glory' with the audience lustily joining in the chorus.[156] Then with impeccable stage management the procession that had preceded Carson, entered the hall and marched in single file down the central aisle 'raising cheers for the red, white, and blue.' They took their positions on the platform and hoisted their standard which declared 'No Home Rule - Leeds Junior Unionists.' The scene was set, and when Carson arrived the *Yorkshire Post* reported how

> Vigorous vocalism gave way to vigorous cheering, and for 2 or 3 minutes there was a sustained volley of hand-clapping and shouting that for whole-souled enthusiasm had been heard within those walls for a very long time.[157]

Lord Londonderry opened proceedings. He informed the hall that he came with '"his colleagues from Ulster to carry the fiery cross, if I might use that expression, to rally the masses to the cause."' He then handed over to Carson who delivered a formulaic speech, yet it was nonetheless effective for it. His oration was the usual heady mix of vitriol, flattery, and conscience-pricking - which was, as always, calculated to incorporate effusive audience participation: '"I cannot bring myself to believe that Leeds, which in the old fight against disintegration stood so valiantly by the Loyal Irish, who have ever upheld the flag, that Leeds is going to desert us in our hour of trial."' Then, right on cue: '(Cheers, and cries of "We won't".)'[158] So great had been the demand for tickets that an overflow meeting took place in the nearby Albert Hall, at which there were similar musical diversions ('patriotic airs acceptably sung by Miss Addie with Mr H. Cockerlyne on the pianoforte'). When the strains of Rule Britannia ceased, and Carson entered, one enthusiast shouted, 'We will not have Home Rule!' whereupon more loud cheering followed.[159]

At the conclusion of this meeting the procession again formed up with the 200-strong bodyguard exchanging their flags for torches. The crowd in the square after the meeting was now much larger than before, and indeed the whole route was now densely lined. The atmosphere was fraught, with Unionist, Liberal, and Labour supporters - and Suffragettes - all having converged on the city centre. There they engendered a rumbling

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[154] *Yorkshire Post*, 16 June 1913
[155] *Yorkshire Post*, 16 June 1913
[156] *Leeds Mercury*, 16 June 1913
[157] *Yorkshire Post*, 16 June 1913
[158] *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 16 June 1913
[159] *Leeds Mercury*, 16 June 1913

roar as each faction tried to make themselves heard, and drown out the other. Foreseeing trouble, mounted policemen rode on each side of Carson's carriage, with other constables and plain clothes officers following behind. But in spite of this conspicuous police presence 'a large body of men, apparently mainly hostile, rushed in behind the carriage, to which many of them clung, pushing among one another and shouting at the top of their voices.'[160] This raised the ire and enthusiasm of the Unionists to a higher pitch, and a confusing melee then ensued. A policemen lost control of his horse in the crush, and as the crowds tried to get out of the way many were badly crushed against a wall, and several women fainted. Amid all this a Suffragette threw an unidentified missile at Carson - who had just doffed his hat - which struck him on the head. 'A cry of execration then went up' and she was instantly seized by the police. Carson kept his cool, and expressed his surprise to reporters 'that a person respectably attired should have so misbehaved herself.' After the meeting the Ulster Party returned to London and in a reply to the interrogations of the press corps they expressed satisfaction, notwithstanding the disorder, with the 'size and representative character of the deputations', and 'the success of the meetings.'[161] The *Times* was slightly more circumspect

> The audience at the night meeting although entirely favourable and often enthusiastic, did not perhaps show the passionate resentment that which made the Scottish demonstrations so deeply impressive, even to seasoned observers of political movements.[162]

On the following Monday morning they travelled to Norwich to resume the tour. The city was represented by one Liberal and one Labour MP in 1913 and one historian has evoked the strength, self-confidence, and high social status of the local Liberal Party before the Great War.[163] Yet as a cathedral city, and the provincial capital of one of England's leading agricultural counties 'Norwich was hospitable to the politics of deference', and the hostility of local nonconformists in the 1890s towards the Irish had been noted by one Liberal peer.[164] Therefore, this meeting was to give the whole of East Anglia the chance to demonstrate their support, and both the Agricultural and St Andrew's Hall had been hired for the purpose. Edmund Reeve, a local Unionist, wrote to the Norwich *Eastern Evening News* explaining how these auditoria were capable of seating 6,500, 'with 2,000 of these seats being allotted to the city of Norwich', another 2,000 set aside for Suffolk (including Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds), and 500 for the Borough of Yarmouth. 'My regret', he concluded, 'is that we have not a hall in the city which will seat the many thousands who wish to attend.'[165] This surge for tickets reflected a sentiment expressed later that year by local Unionists who noted in their annual report that 'Ireland holds and continues to hold the first place in the mind of every thoughtful citizen till the Home Rule question is settled' (it is significant that agents from

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[160] *Yorkshire Post*, 16 June 1913
[161] *Daily Telegraph*, 16 June 1913
[162] *Times*, 16 June 1913
[163] Barry M. Doyle, 'Urban Liberalism and the "lost generation": politics and middle class culture in Norwich, 1900-1935', *Historical Journal*, 38 (1995), 617-34
[164] G. L. Bernstein, 'Liberalism and the Progressive Alliance in the constituencies, 1900-1914: three case studies', *Historical Journal*, 26 (1983), p. 619; see also Bebbington, *Nonconformist Conscience*, p. 103
[165] *Eastern Evening News*, 16 June 1913

the UWUC worked the area very hard, and that the *Norfolk Chronicle* had asked their secretary to provide an 'Irish Notes' section for them).[166] The Great Eastern Railway was quick to anticipate increased demand for transport, and announced their intention to 'run special trains at low fares from most of their stations in Norfolk and Suffolk.'[167]

A programme entitled 'Ulster's Appeal to Great Britain Against Home Rule', adorned with a photograph of Carson in a typically declamatory attitude, was published and disseminated. It informed the electors of Norwich that Carson's train would arrive at Thorpe Station at 5.57pm, after which 'a procession will be formed to the Royal Hotel.' Then, after a formal dinner at the hotel, the main meetings would commence at 8 o'clock, followed by an 'Open Air Meeting on the Market Square.'[168] These plans drew an acerbic response at a meeting of the National Union of Railwaymen in Norwich's Thatched Assembly Rooms. G. H. Roberts, the local Labour M.P., noted the difference between their Trades Union and the Ulster Unionists. 'One was going to threaten them with civil war and murderous strife', said Roberts, 'the other was engaged in the grandest of all work, the alleviation, and ... the complete extirpation of all social ills.'[169] This discord between Progressive and Conservative opinion in the city would be reflected in the events surrounding Carson's East Anglian outing.

On their way to Norwich the Ulster Party stopped briefly at Ipswich Station where he was met by deputations of local Unionists who 'heartily cheered' him.'[170] Upon arrival at Norwich a band struck up some patriotic airs and 'a lusty cheer was raised', though the local press admitted that 'a few groans were mingled with it.' Carson entered a waiting carriage and drove, with a motor convoy behind, up the Prince of Wales Road which was 'heavily thronged', many of whom 'were attracted thither out of curiosity to see so distinguished a visitor.'[171] The Agricultural Hall was full, notwithstanding the heat wave that had made the atmosphere in the auditorium like 'a Turkish bath' (indeed, an enormous block of ice had been stationed amid the ferns on the platform to cool the orators).[172]

The *Times* was impressed. 'East Anglia may be the part of England furthest from Ireland', it noted, 'but its chief city showed tonight that it can respond with a will to the appeal of Ulster.'[173] There was a consensus that the audience was enthusiastic and the *Eastern Daily Press* reported how the audience began singing before the band began to play, and 'now and again a voice inquired, "Are we downhearted?" and from a thousand

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[166] Annual Report for 1913, in the 'Eastern Provincial Division of the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations, Minute Book', BLO, CPA ARE 7/1/6; Diane Urquhart, ed., *The Minutes of the Ulster Women's Unionist Council and Executive Committee, 1911-1940* (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 2001), pp. 56, 58, 70

[167] *Eastern Evening News*, 13 June 1913

[168] 'Ulster's Appeal to Great Britain Against Home Rule. Programme of Visit to East Anglia', Norwich and Norfolk Millennium Library, L.571

[169] *Eastern Daily Press*, 16 June 1913

[170] [Ipswich] *Eastern Daily Times*, 17 June 1913

[171] *Eastern Evening News*, 17 June 1913

[172] *Eastern Daily Press*, 17 June 1913

[173] *Times*, 17 June 1913

Ulster's Appeal to Great Britain

AGAINST

HOME RULE

RT. HON. SIR EDWARD CARSON, P.C.

Defies the Government.

PROGRAMME OF VISIT TO EAST ANGLIA,

and MEETINGS AT THE AGRICULTURAL HALL

and ST. ANDREW'S HALL, NORWICH,

On Monday, June 16th, 1913.

10. Carson 'defies the government' at Norwich (Norwich and Norfolk Millennium Library, L.571)

throats came the answer, "No."'[174] Carson was effusively welcomed and spoke for an hour, and there was also an overflow meeting, 'which are now taken for granted in this campaign.'[175] But it was the aftermath of the meeting that was most noteworthy. For over an hour and half a crowd of around 15,000 people awaited the arrival of Carson in the Market Place, spilling over into the nearby streets. But this was a different crowd to that which had thronged the Agricultural Hall, as the local press observed 'hats and handkerchiefs were wildly waved, whilst cheers and groans battled for mastery. It was a singular picture ... and will live long in the memory of those who participated in it.'[176]

Norwich was a city with an ancient tradition of political ceremonial and plebeian participation. Processions at election time were frequent in the early to mid nineteenth century, and they would invariably culminate at the neutral market place where, at election time, it was physically divided by a chain to keep the opposing factions apart

> There the respective groups of supporters, wearing their candidates' colours, threw abuse (or worse) across the dividing line. Sometimes they attempted to capture the opposition ground. It is difficult to avoid comparison with football supporters of the present day.[177]

The football comparison does not end there. A boisterous gang of youths prominently placed next to the platform were intent on drowning out the Unionist speakers and so began to sing 'On the Ball, City' which was taken up by the crowd, as well as 'Tell the old, old story.'[178] (Indeed, a year later, an audience at Newcastle encouraged F. E. Smith, the member for Walton, to speak with shouts of 'Play up, Liverpool.')[179]It is unsurprising to see such colloquialisms from the terraces at political meetings: as wages rose and leisure time increased attendances at football matches in this period grew so that by 1908/9 English first division matches were watched by 6 million people with an average crowd of 16,000,[180] and the coverage that the sport received in the press attested to its popularity. However, the Ulster Unionists seemed wrong-footed by the seething crowd at Norwich - so different to the sobriety that they demanded from their supporters in Ireland.

Carson, surprised that he could not make himself heard, 'smiled at the swaying and noisy crowd below him', then tried again, 'but he was not, however, to be given a hearing, and finally he essayed to make himself heard over hostile clamourings, composed of groans booing, catcalls, and snatches of ragtime and other songs.'[181]A number of Unionist members attempted to make their selves heard, including James Craig, but to no avail, the surging crowd seemed to be on the verge of riot, having an 'ominous look' in its densest

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[174] *Eastern Daily Press*, 17 June 1913
[175] *Times*, 17 June 1913
[176] *Eastern Evening News*, 17 June 1913
[177] Harrison, *Crowds and History*, p. 162
[178] *Eastern Evening News*, 17 June 1913. The 'City' was presumably a reference to Norwich City Football Club.
[179] [Newcastle] *Evening Mail*, 6 June 1914
[180] H. Cunningham, 'Leisure and Culture', F. M. L. Thompson, *The Cambridge Social History of Britain. Volume 2: People and their Environment* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990), p. 314
[181] *Eastern Evening News*, 17 June 1913

part. The whole company on the platform then decided on a grand gesture: they uncovered their heads and sang the national anthem, 'as if in opposition to the crowd below' before being escorted to their carriages amid loud cheering, and booing.[182]

Though the tour had met with some hostility, particularly in Leeds and Norwich, Carson, as one of the few eminently *national* political figures, was undoubtedly a major draw. 'The depth of feeling displayed could not be expected to be so great as that shown at the Scottish meetings which remain the high water mark of this memorable mission', mused the Times, 'nevertheless, it was obviously sincere.'[183] Whether it was through sympathy or curiosity, his arrival in the provinces would have been a truly notable event. Though we should be wary of the veracity of Carson's pronouncements to a Belfast press keen to fortify the Ulster Unionist community, he was probably being honest when he told the *Evening Telegraph* that 'during twenty years in the House of Commons. I have never witnessed greater scenes of enthusiasm, and I believe that Home Rule and the betrayal of the Irish Loyalists is as much loathed and detested as it was in the old fights of 1886 and 1893.'[184]

Carson's summer tour concluded at Bristol. As was customary, his train was halted at small stations on route – this time at Devizes, and Bath – and, as at everywhere else on his tour the welcome he received was significant. 'The metropolis of the West was found no less responsive or determined', observed the *Bristol Times*, 'than had been Glasgow, Edinburgh, Leeds, and Norwich'.[185] Carson arrived at Temple Meads Station in the early evening and was received by a cheering crowd and a large Unionist deputation; there he made a brief speech before entering his carriage (which was adorned with Union jacks). All 17 Ulster Unionist members were in attendance and, escorted by a detachment of mounted police, they were ceremoniously driven through the crowded streets of the city amid much cheering to the Royal Hotel.[186] After an agreeable dinner they progressed to the Colston Hall where a 5,000 strong audience was being entertained by a patriotic selection rendered on the Grand Organ. Upon their arrival in the hall, the *Belfast Telegraph*, noted with pride that the enormous (48 feet long) 'Balmoral flag was broken behind the platform amid cheering.'[187] Carson, obviously fatigued delegated the opening speech to his leaden Dublin colleague J. H. Campbell, who drew cheers by addressing the Bristolian audience as 'brother loyalists.'[188]

When Carson rose 'he was greeted with such a tumult of cheering' that the reporter from the local press thought that 'his eyes shone with gratification', and seemed to relish mocking the 'imitation of our meetings' undertaken by the Irish Nationalists who had now began a similar tour.[189] He spoke for over an hour, and concluded by painting a homely picture of the 'prayerful people' of Ulster, 'holding meetings day by day ... on

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[182] *Eastern Daily Press*, 17 June 1913
[183] *Times*, 17 June 1913
[184] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 18 June 1913
[185] *Bristol Times and Mirror*, 21 June 1913
[186] *Irish Times*, 21 June 1913
[187] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 21 June 1913
[188] *Times*, 21 June 1913
[189] *Bristol Times and Mirror*, 21 June 1913

their knees to their Great Creator to save them from what they believe to be a great calamity.'[190] After the meeting Carson and the Ulster Party, accompanied by the Duke and Duchess of Beaufort, drove in procession in decorated and illuminated carriages from Colston hall to College Green, 'through crowded streets and tremendous enthusiasm displayed by the spectators.' The Ulster leader then appeared on the illuminated balcony of the Royal Hotel to acknowledge the crowds, and, just as at Norwich, 'there were rounds of cheering intermingled with slight boohing' [sic].[191] Carson resolutely declined the appeals for him to make another speech, presumably because he had little voice left, and before the thousands dispersed the band outside the hotel played 'True till Death.'[192]

[190] *Times*, 21 June 1913
[191] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 21 June 1913
[192] *Bristol Evening Times*, 21 June 1913

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'Stoutly and Robustly Protestant':
The religious dimension of Ulster's appeal

Is the great Conservative Party going to rely on sectarian hatred as its chief weapon in the struggle with Liberalism?

Letter to the *Times*, 3 November 1913

Carson's tour had cemented his position as the icon of the whole Ulster movement. Yet that is not to say that he was at the centre of all anti-Home Rule activity in Britain. One historian has noted the bewildering number of Protestant associations that existed at the turn of the century, and soon after the June tour 8,000 members of various London Protestant Societies convened at the Albert Hall for a 'Faith and Freedom' Meeting to demonstrate their solidarity with the Protestants of Ireland.[1] The choreography was remarkably similar to Unionist meetings in this period with the chairman, Sir Robert Kennedy, and his entourage processing into the Hall led by a standard bearer carrying a Union Jack. The *Times* claimed unconvincingly that the meeting 'was non-political and non-sectarian', though they did concede that 'the proceedings were characterized with an almost religious fervour.' It may have been non-political in a strictly Party sense, but it was certainly sectarian, as the questions put to the assembly vividly attest:

> Do you as an assembly of loyal Protestants declare your solemn conviction that Home Rule is dangerous to the religious liberties and spiritual well-being of Ireland?
> Answer – We do.
> Do you pledge to yourself to help in every lawful way your co-religionists in Ireland in resisting the imposition of Home Rule upon their native land? – We do.
> Do you declare that experience shows the uselessness of any guarantee offered for the protection of Protestants by Roman Catholics? – We do.
> Do you here solemnly call upon the Protestants of Ireland to continue undiminished their opposition to Home Rule, and thus to save their country from the dominion of the Romish Church? – We do.
> Do you approve the Covenant signed by thousands of the Irish people on Ulster day, 1912, and pray that by God's blessing the observance of that Covenant will defeat the proposals which it repudiates? – We do.
> Do you therefore call upon the government to withdraw the Home Rule Bill?

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[1] John Wolffe, 'Change and Continuity in British Anti-Catholicism, 1829-1982', Frank Tallett and Nicholas Atkin, eds, *Catholicism in Britain and France since 1789* (London: Hambledon, 1996), p. 72; *Morning Post*, 18 June 1913

We do.
A great outburst of cheering followed.[2]

The affirmative response to all these questions was apparently 'stentorian', and when Canon Stephenson of Belfast asked what they in England and Scotland were going to do, there were shouts from two sides of the Hall 'we will fight for you.'[3] Most of those present had been Nonconformists, but one historian has claimed that an 'apolitical mood seized Nonconformity around 1910' making that group 'unresponsive to appeals from both sides of the Irish question.' This is open to question. For it should be noted that the same author has maintained that: 'it was anti-Catholicism [among Nonconformists] that created the bulk of rank and file opposition to Home Rule in the first place.'[4] Judging by the events in the Albert Hall, it seems that many were still as opposed.

By late summer there was grave concern in certain parts of England that there some who would literally take up arms in Ulster's defence. Archibald Salvidge had received a letter from Lord Willoughby de Broke asking to stage an anti-Home Rule meeting under the auspices of the 'British League for the Support of Ulster and the Union' at the Liverpool Town Hall or some other central location. Having his ear to the ground, Salvidge was perturbed by the implications of this, and he wrote immediately to Lord Derby to inform him that he had taken it upon himself to tell Broke that he would rather that this meeting were not held, and surprisingly, considering his role in welcoming Carson himself to Liverpool in 1912, he stated that 'whilst we were prepared to help Ulster in every way, and if the worst came to the worst we would do our part, still we were opposed to meetings and speeches being delivered which *would only stir up sectarian differences in this city* [my italics].' This does seem mightily hypocritical, as that had largely been his life's work, but Salvidge may well have been concerned that without his own leadership matters could soon degenerate into serious communal conflict. Or as he put it quite sensibly, but with an ominous hint of menace

> If they were really in earnest and wished to get volunteers to go to Ulster in case of a row this ought to be done in a quiet and solid manner and not by stirring up the mob whose only view of helping Ulster would be to have riots and disturbances in Liverpool with the Nationalist community.[5]

Broke had to be satisfied with addressing one of two meetings held in the city to coincide with the anniversary of the signing of the Ulster Covenant, and the setting up of the Provisional Government of Ulster on 24 September 1913. In Ulster this had been celebrated with a reaffirmation of the Covenant in the Ulster Hall where a Presbyterian divine, preaching from the Book of Joshua, said that 'for the people of Ulster to accept Home Rule would be [like] Israel going back to the domination of the Egyptians.'[6]

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[2] *Times*, 18 June 1913
[3] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 18 June 1913
[4] Bebbington, *Nonconformist Conscience*, p. 105
[5] Letter from Archibald Salvidge to the Earl of Derby, 8 September 1913. LRO, 920 DER(17) 33/SAL 1913.
[6] *Belfast Newsletter*, 29 September 1913

Portentously, this was followed by a review of 12,000 UVF men outside Belfast, and it was reported that 'a big contingent of Lancashire Territorials accompanied Mr F. E. Smith from Liverpool.'[7] It is unclear whether these men were actually military reservists or Party delegates, but the Unionist MP Ronald McNeill recalled the 'many English sympathisers with Ulster ... who came to Belfast for the great Unionist demonstrations.'[8] Indeed, in connection with a report on the importation of arms to Ulster the *Times* noted that 'passengers travelling to Belfast from London, Manchester, and Yorkshire districts have been particularly numerous.'[9] What is more, a number of English regional papers sent their own reporters to Northern Ireland to report on the arming of the Ulstermen. 'There was certainly nothing of the mock soldier about them', wrote a special correspondent from the *Yorkshire Post*. 'Led by keen, smart-looking officers, they marched past in quarter column with fine, swinging steps, as if they had been in training for years.'[10]

In England, many Unionists celebrated Ulster day with some fervour. It was reported that in Liverpool Ulster Day was observed 'as a day of prayer for Ireland, and in at least a dozen churches in the city special sermons were preached on the religious aspect of Home Rule.'[11]

Liverpool's sectarian instincts had not been shackled by the peace conference of 1911. In March Law, the MP for Bootle (where two thousand of the voters were Orangemen),[12] had received a letter from the Bootle Church Association objecting to the appointment of the Roman Catholic Lord Edward Talbot as Unionist Chief Whip,[13] and the forces of Protestantism in the city were keen to celebrate their solidarity with Ulster. Mr Louis Edwards, organiser of the Midlands Protestant Truth Society, and Grand Secretary of the Grand Orange Institution of England, told the Liverpool press that that day's meeting was 'only the beginning' and that

> He hoped to gather together every Orangeman and every Protestant and take them to London, and there, in the Crystal Palace, to make one of the greatest protests that had ever taken place against Home Rule. Orangemen from Ireland and Scotland would be there, and if the bill had not been killed by then, that demonstration would mean its death blow.[14]

Great store was placed on the effectiveness of such 'demonstrations' and they were held with a persistence which, in the face of discouragement, is striking. On the afternoon of 28 September 1913, close on 7,000 Orangemen headed by drum and fife, and concertina bands formed up in various parts of the city and marched to the Sun Hall where a

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[7] *Daily Graphic*, 29 September 1913
[8] One of the most popular attractions for these visitors was the UVF signalling station at Bangor, see Ronald McNeill, *Ulster's Stand for Union* (London: John Murray, 1922), p. 219
[9] *Times*, 12 December 1913
[10] *Yorkshire Post*, 22 September 1913
[11] [Liverpool] *Evening Express*, 29 September 1913
[12] Clarke, *Lancashire*, p. 266
[13] Letter to Andrew Bonar Law from T. Thonboe, 15 March 1913. HLRO, BL/29/2/23. To Law's credit he replied that he would not take into account anyone's religious persuasion, see HLRO, BL33/5/17
[14] *Liverpool Courier*, 29 September 1913

combined service was to take place. Being only two years since the Peace Conference 'every precaution was taken in choosing the routes for the processions to avoid the least likelihood of any unpleasantness', with successful results: there were no reported flashpoints. At the convocation in the Sun Hall, 5,000 were present with hundreds locked out. It was presided over by Sir Robert Anderson, (the 'ex Scotland Yard chief'), and after reaffirming their covenant pledge Mr J. Gage Dougherty (Rector of St Mary's Dublin, and Deputy Grand Chaplain of the Loyal Orange Institution of Ireland) told those present that 'they in Ireland dreaded being put under the heel of the priesthood', and 'the element that underlay the agitation for Home Rule was devotion to Rome on the one hand and hatred of England on the other.'[15] The infamous Pastor George Wise said he wished to voice the views of Lancashire Protestants. 'To say that the British people were in favour of Home Rule was absolutely untrue. It had never been placed before the country', his colleague James Kensit added that 'if Rome was to be the top dog in Ireland, they could not expect Protestants to provide the kennel for the dog to lie in.'[16]

Although the prospect of British League activity on Merseyside had caused consternation in the Liverpool Constitutional Club, Knowsley Hall, and Hatfield House – indeed, Lord Robert Cecil wrote to Broke in September of his 'profound horror of civil war' and that BLSUU leaflets 'rather frighten me'[17] - it had had the opposite effect in Ulster. The Irish Unionist Alliance Yearbook thought that 'such a British movement is inspiriting to all Irish unionists at the present time,'[18] and James Craig expressed his delight to Willoughby de Broke, 'I am delighted with your activity' he wrote, 'I know there is cold water in abundance but I will find it does not come from the democracy in Liverpool.'[19] Willoughby de Broke had told Law that it was 'our volunteers in Liverpool' who had invited him, 'though the local Unionist Party is warning us off.'[20]

At the British League meeting in the Philharmonic Hall, de Broke took a very different line to those Orangemen who ha argued for moral force, expressing frustration with their quaint approach. 'Demonstrations were not going to kill Home Rule', he said, supporters of Ulster would have to 'enrol themselves and drill' and 'in the last resort they would have to meet force with force and coercion by coercion.'[21] (He had told Law, matter-of-factly, that 'in the absence of the old Constitution, the only thing left is physical force.')[22] Broke recalled how Liverpool had demonstrated so impressively against the coercion of Ulster a year earlier, and that they had in that city 'a far greater number of volunteers who had actually signed on than in any other part of the kingdom - but they wanted more.' This was met with cries of '"you will get them."' This encouraged Broke to indulge in a dialogue with his audience:

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[15] [Liverpool] *Evening Express*, 29 September 1913
[16] *Liverpool Courier*, 30 September 1913
[17] Letter from Lord Robert Cecil to Lord Willoughby de Broke, 18 September 1913. HLRO, WB/6/3
[18] *Irish Unionist Alliance: Twenty-seventh Annual Report, 1912-13* (Dublin, 1913), pp. 17-18. PRONI, D/989/A/7/4
[19] Letter from James Craig to Lord Willoughby de Broke, 16 September 1913. HLRO, WB/6/2.
[20] Letter from Lord Willoughby de Broke to Andrew Bonar Law, 11 September 1913. HLRO, BL/30/2/10
[21] *Liverpool Courier*, 30 September 1913
[22] Letter from Lord Willoughby de Broke to Andrew Bonar Law, 11 September 1913. HLRO, BL/30/2/10

Broke: I want to know what we are going to do?
Audience: "Help", and "we are going to fight."
Broke: How many in Liverpool of the 250,000 who paraded before Sir Edward Carson a year ago would be prepared to risk their life, their property, their means?
Audience: Shouts of "all", and cheers.'[23]

A barnstorming performance, which Lord Castlereagh (second on the bill) thought had 'put the meeting right and it was a difficult task to follow.'[24]

Thanks to their demographic, religious, and political profiles Liverpool and the wider environs of South Lancashire were epicentres of pro-Ulster sentiment. The Unionists were therefore obviously keen to exploit this attitude and were therefore alive to any suggestions as to how this could be achieved. One such plan came to light in July 1913. As a brewing town Warrington was firmly Tory,[25] and the Unionist Party agent there had suggested to Arthur Steel Maitland that working class volunteers should be sought out who would be willing to put up the wives or families of Ulstermen in their own homes should hostilities break out in Ireland. Steel Maitland was enthusiastic about this idea and had written to Lord Derby explaining why

> This would be just what is wanted. It is the lack of imagination at present, which is our great enemy. If, however, the scheme is to be pushed at all, it will have most effect in Lancashire and Yorkshire, and we ought to get hold of the various Lancashire divisions, to take it in hand jointly.[26]

James Craig had already got wind of this, and thought the idea splendid. F. E. Smith's brother, Harold Smith (Unionist member for Warrington) had mentioned it to him some time ago

> I expressed the opinion [to Smith] that it was a stroke of genius, and I suggested to him that the Duchess of Abercorn should be asked to head the movement which in Lancashire and Scotland should stir the working classes as would nothing else in connection with the Home Rule question.[27]

Craig, the publicity expert, was possibly more interested in this idea as a public relations stunt rather than a practical suggestion. Nevertheless, Steel Maitland informed Derby that Harold Smith had told him that the 'refugee movement' in Warrington was showing signs of success and he was urging George Younger to precipitate something similar in Scotland (although, even as a proud Scot, he noted wryly that 'Scottish hospitality would be more limited by considerations of the sixpence impelled than would be the case in

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[23] *Yorkshire Post*, 30 September 1913
[24] Letter from Viscount Castlereagh to Lord Willoughby de Broke, 2 October 1913. HLRO, WB/6/4
[25] Clarke, *Lancashire*, pp. 269-70
[26] Letter from Arthur Steel Maitland to the Earl of Derby, 30 July 1913 LRO 920 DER (17) 31/1
[27] Copy of letter from James Craig to Arthur Steel Maitland, 27 July 1913 LRO 920 DER (17) 31/1

Lancashire or Yorkshire'). What would be so effective about this plan was that in his opinion it would 'bring home the situation in ways which appeal, unlike speeches.'[28]

Smith sent a detailed report concerning the refugee movement to Steel Maitland. He explained how they have received undertakings to house almost 1,000 refugees, and he had written to all the Lancashire Unionist newspapers and to the secretaries of all the women's leagues in Lancashire to publicise the movement. He was convinced of two points

1. It is the sort of movement that appeals to the hearts of the Lancashire working classes, and also brings home the grim reality of the situation.
2. It is work which is particularly suited to our women's organisations, and it is work which they want.[29]

He doubted whether any constituency will be as responsive as Warrington, but 'if all Lancashire took it up as soon as the holidays are over, we should have a great return.'[30] Publicity for this scheme was impressive – with a front page splash in the *Daily Express* which read 'TO THE WOMEN OF ENGLAND.' 'What is to become of the women during the days of terror that threaten Ulster?,' it asked, suggesting that the housing of refugees from the North of Ireland 'was surely women's work.'[31]There were 6,000 members of the Women's Unionist and Tariff Reform League in Warrington alone, and 4,000 copies of the *Express* were sold in the town 'I believe it has done a lot of good in Warrington', Smith concluded, 'the Radicals try to ridicule it but all that happens is that greater attention in drawn to Ulster, which is just what we want.'[32]

This became a popular scheme, and was soon endorsed by the Primrose League. In December the Belfast press reported that the Primrose League in Berwick-upon-Tweed had resolved unanimously to support the project for giving to shelter to Ulster women and children, and that they planned to instruct their 'wardens to canvass the district.'[33] The League also set about enrolling volunteers in Darlington, Chester, Hawick, and elsewhere.[34] It also became a fashionable cause among aristocratic circles. In 1914 Viscountess Chilston informed Lady Londonderry that she had held an enthusiastic meeting at her country house to discuss taking in refugees, and she thought 'many were ready to do so.'[35] And in May of that year the Southern Irish Unionists managed to convince the 'Help the Ulster Women and Children League' to offer 'temporary asylum'

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[28] Letter from Arthur Steel Maitland to the Earl of Derby 10 September 1913 920 DER (17) 17/10

[29] Letter from Harold Smith to Arthur Steel Maitland 2 September 1913. LRO, 920 DER (17) 17/10 (UNSORTED)

[30] Letter from Harold Smith to Arthur Steel Maitland 2 September 1913. LRO, 920 DER (17) 17/10 (UNSORTED)

[31] *Daily Express*, 12 August 1913

[32] Letter from Harold Smith to Arthur Steel Maitland 2 September 1913. LRO, 920 DER (17) 17/10 (UNSORTED)

[33] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 3 December 1913

[34] Letter from James Freeman to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 22 December 1913. DRO, D/Lo/C 652/2. See also the *Chester Courant*, 28 January 1914, and the *Times* 17 March 1914

[35] Letter from Viscountess Chilston to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 29 January 1914. PRONI, D/2846/1/11/9

to refugees from the Southern provinces of Ireland.[36] Indeed, by August 1914 the League's Committee had been able to secure promises of accommodation for 8,000 and donations of £17,000.[37]

By late 1913, Unionists became increasingly optimistic that their message was getting through. In October Arthur Balfour wrote that he thought that the government were at last beginning to appreciate the 'strength of feeling' in the country over the Ulster question.[38] And at about the same time an anonymous correspondent from Yorkshire informed Lady Londonderry that he thought that 'the British mind is at last taking things in',[39] and the Secretary of the Irish Unionist Association, R. J. Herbert Shaw, wrote triumphantly to the *Irish Times* to inform them that 'public interest in the Irish question increases rapidly throughout Great Britain', which, he believed was attributable to the propaganda work of his organisation.[40] Whereas, the *Spectator* declared that the Liberal Party had finally realised that the Orangemen were not merely bluffing, for in their opinion 'the circumstances now are very different.'[41] Not least because, as the *Times* – in an editorial entitled 'The Temper of the Country' – concluded, 'the voters of England and Scotland are thinking of the danger in Ulster.'[42] So was Asquith. Six weeks earlier he had written to Churchill from Scotland about the crudity of Tory threats, but that there was also a need to make a bargain about Ulster as the ultimate price for Home Rule.[43] The re-emergence of the old style of politics was a development that severely discombobulated the progressive wing of the Liberal Party. 'It's really too awful to think', wrote Charles Masterman, 'of an "Autumn Campaign" of thousands of speeches by Liberal MPs on the blessing of Free Trade, Home Rule, and Welsh Disestablishment.'[44]

The North East of England was a region hitherto untouched by the Ulster campaign. Although the Liberal Party remained dominant in Edwardian County Durham and Northumberland,[45] there were some Unionist enclaves centred around the region's many dockyards and armaments factories. As one historian has perceptively adduced 'the Tories' very masculine views on several ... issues (particularly drink) made North-East working-class Conservatism a resilient force.'[46] A low-level Protestant nativism coupled with anti-Irish hostility made this a promising destination for the Ulster proselytisers. At a meeting of the 'Londonderry Habitation' of the Primrose League at Seaham Harbour (a

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[36] Letter from R. J. Shaw to Pembroke Wicks (Carson's private secretary), 27 May 1914. PRONI, D/989/A/8/2/19/35
[37] Pugh, *Tories and the People*, p. 165
[38] Blanche E. C. Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour* vol. II (London: Hutchinson, 1936), p. 75
[39] Anonymous letter (from Kirkdale Manor, Nawton, Yorkshire) to the Marchioness of Londonderry 28 September 1913 PRONI/D/2846/1/11/59
[40] *Irish Times*, 23 September 1913
[41] *Spectator*, 27 September 1913
[42] *Times*, 10 November 1913
[43] Letter from Herbert Asquith to Winston Churchill, 19 Sep 1913. CCC, CHAR 2/62/59-60.
[44] Duncan Tanner, *Political Change and the Labour Party, 1900-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 87
[45] A. W. Purdue, 'The Liberal and Labour Parties in North East Politics, 1900-1914: The Struggle for Supremacy', *International Review of Social History*, 26 (1981), p. 24
[46] Tanner, *Labour Party*, pp. 227, 235

centre of 'No-Popery' in County Durham)[47] in July a Miss Vesey from County Carlow pronounced alarmingly

> Any parliament in Dublin, elected by people, the majority of whom were Roman Catholics, would be controlled by the Roman Catholic Church. Today the Nationalist Party would have little or no influence in Ireland if the support of the priests were withdrawn from it.[48]

Thus Orange sympathisers were already abroad in the county, and on the 14th of September Carson came to Durham City to address an open air meeting at Wharton Park. Being a Cathedral city, Durham's attendant Anglicanism made it a solidly Tory enclave in what was a largely Liberal county,[49] (albeit one with a large Irish community).[50] In a notable display of ecclesiastical partiality the crowds were entertained by the 'the Lay Clerks of Durham Cathedral [who] sang admirably a number of patriotic songs,' before the speakers arrived.[51] Carson's visit was a major event for the surrounding area, and the Orangemen of Newcastle Loyal Orange Lodge 371 minuted their eager anticipation of the event so they could go to Durham to see Carson 'their honoured leader.'[52] The Lodgemen in the North East were hardcore in their support for Carson, and some were ready, to at least declare that they would resort to violence to defend their fellow subjects in Ireland. The official minutes of the Hebburn LOL 339 on South Tyneside reflect this seriousness:

> Br Cameron gave the brethren all the instructions required and in an enthusiastic manner told the brethren to let nothing prevent them from turning out in full lodge strength to meet Sir Edward Carson the gallant leader of their Ulster brethren, so that Sir Edward could see for himself that the loyalists of England are determined to take their stand with their Ulster brethren, and under his leadership, fight, if required, for their civil and religious liberties.[53]

The local press reported that 'during the early afternoon six heavily freighted excursion trains landed large contingents of Ulster's friends in the historic city', and just as they arrived it began to rain lightly.[54] Note the word excursion, for many would have looked forward to this event – and it was certainly colourful. A lively procession of local Orangemen through the city preceded the meeting which was held in a park whose natural sloping sides made for a natural amphitheatre, rather like the grounds at Craigavon.[55] Leading local Orangemen were honoured with prominent positions behind

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[47] R. J. Cooter, 'Lady Londonderry and the Irish Catholics of Seaham Harbour: No Popery out of context', *Recusant History*, 13 (1975-6)
[48] *Newcastle Chronicle*, 30 July, 1913
[49] Pelling, *Social Geography*, p. 327
[50] M. McManus, 'Folk Devils and Moral Panics? Irish Stereotyping in Mid-Victorian Durham', *Bulletin of the Durham Local History Society*, 53 (1994)
[51] *Times*, 15 September 1913
[52] *Belfast Weekly News*, 28 August 1913
[53] *Belfast Weekly News*, 11 September 1913
[54] *Durham County Advertiser*, 20 September 1913
[55] *Yorkshire Post*, 15 September 1913

Carson on the platform and their 'sashes and brilliant robes gave an effective splash of colour in what, in the dull light, would otherwise have been a sombre scene.'[56] Overhead in front of the speaker floated a large Union Jack.

After being introduced by Lord Londonderry, Carson (who 'enjoyed a most enthusiastic reception') said that: '"a man must fight to maintain threatened freedoms, elementary rights, and even lives, no matter what the consequences might be." (Cheers.)'[57] Much was made about how rapt the audience were by the speeches, and the *Times* claimed that 'electrical again, in its affect on the audience were the dignified sentences in which he urged that the king's name be kept out of Party politics.'[58] However, this decorum was open to interpretation, and some perceived a lack of enthusiasm in the hushed audience. This moved a local woman to write to Lady Londonderry with some novel analysis

> We were greatly impressed by the meeting here on the 13th. I hear that disappointment was felt at the small amount of applause – I think the subjects treated were too deep, and the whole question too tragic for it. Besides the speakers so held the audience that no one wished to interrupt by making the noise [sic].[59]

The Newcastle and Yorkshire press had estimated the crowds in the Park as being around 5,000,[60] whereas the *Times* thought they were nearer 9,000. The *Morning Post* plumped for 2,000[61] which drew an instant response from Richard Dawson of the Union Defence League, who wrote to 'correct any erroneous impression that might be created by the apparent smallness of the attendance as described in your report', and that the correct figure was around 8,000.[62] Whatever the true number, the Unionists must have been pleased with the meeting for their next set piece rally would take place in the North East. After Carson's June tour the *Belfast Evening Telegraph* had expressed the hope that, considering the success of the tour, 'it will be possible to arrange another tour in England. There are still many centres to be converted.' Liverpool, Birmingham, Cardiff, Plymouth were all, in their words, 'sound for the Union', but what about 'Newcastle upon Tyne, Bradford, Leicester, Southampton, and other cities' who were not so sound?[63] In August Carson had suggested to Law that they address a meeting in the autumn together 'to show solidarity' between the British Unionist Party and Ulster,[64] and it was to Tyneside that Carson's bandwagon would now turn.

The city of Newcastle had established itself as a Liberal bastion in the nineteenth century, nurturing Liberal nabobs such as Joseph Cowen, John Morley, Walter Runciman and

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[56] *Times*, 15 September 1913
[57] [Newcastle] *Evening Chronicle*, 13 September 1913
[58] *Times*, 15 September 1913
[59] Letter from Annie Tristram (from South Bailey, Durham City) to the Marchioness of Londonderry 12 October 1913 PRONI/D/2846/1/11/54
[60] *Newcastle Journal*, 15 September 1913, *Yorkshire Post*, 15 September 1913
[61] *Morning Post*, 15 September 1913
[62] *Morning Post*, 17 September 1913
[63] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 21 June 1913
[64] Letter from Sir Edward Carson to Andrew Bonar Law, 1 August 1913. HLRO, BL/30/1/12

others, and it dominated the region culturally and politically.[65] In 1913 the city of Newcastle was still represented by two Liberals, and the Unionists recognised the difficulties they faced in this strategically vital city - particularly the hostility of the local press. 'Since the *North Mail* was sold to Lord Furness', wrote Steel Maitland to Earl Percy,[66] 'we have had no 1/2d newspaper to support us in Newcastle and the important surrounding district [original emphasis]. Since its sale it has done us considerable harm'.[67]The Conservatives did have a presence in the region, although it could hardly be thought of as one of their heartlands. Thus, for all their resurgence in the 1910 elections the Unionists only achieved only a modest swing in Northumberland and Durham[68].

Many Liberals in the North east met the question of Home Rule with no little distaste, and at a large Liberal gathering at Byker, Newcastle, Carson and Salisbury were denounced as the Robespierre and Danton of the Irish 'revolution'. Further condemnation was reserved for Carson for having played a dangerous game by encouraging the Ulstermen 'bigoted Orangemen, bigoted Protestants, but none the less sincere and earnest in their views—by telling them that they would lose their civil and religious liberties following Home Rule, while telling them that the government would not send the troops against them if they took up arms.'[69]

Yet the North East was also the location of significant demonstrations in support of Ulster before 1914, which considering the region's political profile would seem unlikely. But there was a sectarian strain on Tyneside which we would do well not to ignore;[70] and on certain occasions the Liberal bastion of Newcastle upon Tyne did not appear so impregnable. Prominent 'pro-Boers' on Tyneside like the MPs Thomas Burt and Charles Fenwick, while retaining their seats, had haemorrhaged votes in the 'khaki election' of 1900; and there is a persuasive argument to say that this was because in the North-East 'seafaring and shipbuilding combined with a military tradition [made for] strong support for the war.'[71] This fact is significant because support for Ulster was in many ways the manifestation of a similar species of Imperial sentiment. It is instructive therefore to learn that Bonar Law certainly recognised that this was primarily a patriotic issue that the Tories could capitalize on, and that the UWUC had been diligently carrying on their

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[65] That contention is discussed in the following: Joan Hugman, 'Joseph Cowen of Newcastle and Radical Liberalism' unpublished PhD thesis, Northumbria University (1993), and Nigel Todd, *The Militant Democracy* (Whitley Bay: Bewick, 1990).

[66] Percy was the heir of the Duke of Northumberland.

[67] Letter from Arthur Steel Maitland to Earl Percy, 16 February 1914. Northumberland Household Archives, MSS F/192.

[68] 39.9 per cent of the total votes cast in December 1910, as opposed to 35.1 in 1906, see Blewett, *Peers, Parties, and People*, p. 495.

[69] *Evening Chronicle*, 22 September 1913.

[70] F. Neal, 'English-Irish Conflict in the north-east of England', P. Buckland, and J. C. Belchem, eds, *The Irish in British Labour History* (Conference Proceedings in Irish Studies, i, Liverpool, 1993).

[71] Henry Pelling, *Popular Politics and Society in late Victorian Britain* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 94, the author made a similar claim regarding the Highlands of Scotland where a comparable military and naval tradition existed.

missionary work in Northumberland and Durham throughout 1913.[72] Moreover, there were obvious linkages between the great urban areas of Northern Britain. As Jeremy Smith has rightly pointed out, 'his heavy-handed political extremism had behind it clear electoral intentions, aiming at areas of intense protestant sentiment and non-conformity, such as Liverpool, Glasgow, parts of Manchester *and the ship-yards of the North-East*' (emphasis added).[73]

Perhaps because of this, the Unionists decided to come not to Newcastle, but to Wallsend, a bustling shipbuilding town along the Tyne. Viscount Ridley (the leader of the Unionist Party in Northumberland) explained his reasons for selecting the town as an appropriate venue. Firstly, he argued, there were no really large halls in Newcastle, and what is more the Wallsend ice rink lay in the 'centre of a thickly populated district [and] will accommodate probably fifteen thousand [it is] easily accessible from Newcastle by two different tram services [and we] can be certain of absolutely filling the Hall.'[74]

The wider constituency of Tynemouth was then represented by a Liberal, but Wallsend itself was classic Unionist territory: a naval dockyard town, a keystone in Tyneside's 'arsenal economy', and these patriotic appeals 'tended to be most convincing when they coincided with personal interest.'[75] Relevant too, was the local Irish population – both Catholic and Protestant – who provided a significant proportion of the workforce.[76] Furthermore, there were six Primrose League Habitations in the towns on the eastern end of the Tyne,[77] and the North Tyneside Orangemen were staunch supporters of Carson too. In September LOL 395 of Wallsend agreed to send '£1 out of lodge funds to the Carson Defence Fund';[78] and directly across the Tyne at the brethren of LOL 428 ('Jarrow Purple Heroes') decided to stage a social evening to raise money for the anti-Home Rule campaign.

> [A]fter discussing the advisability of 432 having a smoker [an informal gathering of men only], Bro Todd moved and Bro Rowan second that we hold a social on November 29 in Lodge Room in Hotel, tickets to be 1/- each. Bro Anderson to cater

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[72] Hugh Cunningham, 'The Conservative Party and Patriotism', Robert Colls and Phillip Dodd, eds, *Englishness: Politics and Culture, 1880-1920* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1986), p. 291; Urquhart, *Minutes*, p. 94

[73] Smith, 'Bluff, bluster, and brinkmanship', p. 15

[74] Letter from Viscount Ridley to Andrew Bonar Law, 23 August 1913. HLRO, BL/30/1/25

[75] This was certainly true among the workers at the Armstrong Vickers plant who had did tend to vote Unionist because of their commitment to defence spending, see Wilfried Fest, 'Jingoism and xenophobia in the electioneering strategies of British ruling elites before 1914', Paul Kennedy and Anthony Nicholls, eds, *Nationalist and Racialist Movements in Britain and Germany before 1914* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1981), p. 181; see also Pelling, *Social Geography*, p. 325

[76] William Murphy was nearly killed by irate Irishmen at neighbouring Tynemouth in 1869, see Walter L. Arnstein, 'The Murphy Riots: A Victorian Dilemma', *Victorian Studies*, 19:2 (1975), p. 65

[77] As well as a habitation in Wallsend itself, there were branches at Willington, Walker, North Shields, Tynemouth, South Shields, and Jarrow, Pugh, *Tories and the People*, Appendix XV Northern England, p. 244

[78] LOL 432 'Jarrow Purple Heroes', Jarrow, minutes, 4 October 1913.

for refreshments at 7d per head and after all expenses paid the surplice [sic] money to be sent to Sir Ed[ward] Carson's Defence Fund.[79]

With 200 tickets printed, the lodgemen clearly anticipated a significant show of support for the concert and the cause.

It was soon announced that Carson and Bonar Law would hold a rally at the Ice Rink in Wallsend, and tickets were put on sale at from one shilling to a guinea, and were evidently soon snapped up.[80] The day's proceedings on 29 October began with the seventh annual conference of the Northumberland County Division of the National Unionist Association of Conservative and Liberal Unionist Organisations, held at Tilly's Rooms in Newcastle.[81] The mass meeting that followed in the evening was one of the biggest events ever seen in the town: the rink, which was described by the *Shields Daily News* as 'possibly one of the largest buildings of its kind in the province', could hold 15,000 persons and there is every reason to believe it was full.[82] One correspondent expressed disbelief that there were 'that many chairs in Wallsend.'[83] More than 500 stewards had been taken on to marshal the crowds, they even used a semaphore system to communicate with each other because the venue was so big.[84] 'There were moments when the signallers who were wagging flags for all the world like tick-tackers at the races', reported the *Northern Echo*, 'seemed to be conducting a chorus that was very effective in volume.'[85] The massive arena was festooned in typical style: 'Union Jacks fell from every girder', reported the *Evening Mail*, alongside which were evocative slogans, or 'War Cries' as they put it, such as 'One King, One Flag, One Parliament', and 'No Surrender.'[86]

The demonstration was lit by 16 arc lamps – much like at Liverpool a year before – and, as always, a local band amused the audience with patriotic airs like 'Rule Britannia', and the 'Old Brigade' (although the *Chronicle* pointed out that 'the majority of the musical selections were Rag-time numbers').[87] The audience began to gather at least two hours before the motorcade was due to arrive in Wallsend.[88] The decision to attend early was a sensible precaution as there was stated to have been 30,000 applicants for seats, and 'if all the standing places had been utilised, then it was estimated that there would be 17,000 present.' Moreover, if that was the case then this was the 'largest indoor meeting ever

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[79] *Belfast Weekly News*, 4 September 1913
[80] *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 24 September 1913.
[81] *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 24 September 1913.
[82] *Shields Daily News*, 20 October 1913.
[83] *Newcastle Evening Mail*, 29 October 1913, it was explained that 'they had been commandeered from various towns from Newcastle to Whitley [Bay].'
[84] *Shields Daily News*, 30 October 1913.
[85] *Northern Echo*, 30 October 1913
[86] *Newcastle Evening Mail*, 29 October 1913.
[87] *Daily Chronicle*, 30 October 1913
[88] Indeed, it was thought that 60 to 70 cars would be needed to ferry the bigwigs to and fro. In the end, more than 140 vehicles were present. *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 29, 30 October 1913; *Shields Daily News*, 30 October 1913.

held in the North of England.'[89] Just prior to the arrival of the Unionist leaders, an announcement was made to the assemblage that 'there must be no further smoking, as the atmosphere was already becoming too thick', and as the smoke cleared, Bonar Law and Carson dramatically mounted the velvet draped platform and were greeted with a rendition of 'For they Are Jolly Good Fellows.'[90]

Bonar Law spoke first, his rising occasioning 'a great outburst of enthusiasm, the audience cheering and waving hats and handkerchiefs.'[91] He began by reiterating one of his most controversial statements: that if 'the government forces Home Rule on Ulster without the sanction of the electors and Ulster resists, then she will have the support of the whole Unionist Party.' The Tory leader spoke for about an hour, to which the audience listened with 'breathless interest.'[92] He then gave way to Carson, who also spoke for an hour. He took the opportunity to rebuff Lord Loreburn's conciliatory offer, declaring that any compromise would be useless 'unless constant with the [terms of] the Ulster Covenant.'[93] What is perhaps more interesting than the speeches themselves, was the customary procession parade through the streets of the borough that followed the meeting. The form of which was noted approvingly by the secretary of the Wallsend 'Enniskillen True Blues' lodge: 'the reception the[y] were to accord to Mr Bonar Law and Sir Edward Carson [was to be] in the form of a Torch Light Procession.'[94]

Bonar Law and Carson left the rink at 9.30, accompanied by Lord Ridley entered an 'open motor landau' and, in a striking instance of the 'invention of tradition' they were ceremoniously driven to the borough boundary of Wallsend. As the borough had only been incorporated in 1902 this was hardly an ancient custom, yet the form of this ceremony was, however, suitably antiquated. This spectacular torchlight procession was headed by a band, and to the delight of those in the leading vehicles, was evidently quite a spectacle: 'There were thousands of persons to give the distinguished visitors another welcome, and both statesmen hat in hand, acknowledged the cheers that were raised.'[95]

This had been an enormous, well-disciplined demonstration, an indication of the size of which is amply illustrated by the length of the motorised procession: 'what with motorcars and other vehicles following inline, must have been fully a mile in length, and was a capital wind-up to the evening's proceedings.'[96] The local authorities seem not to have been overly worried about the mood of these meetings, for, even if regular press

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[89] *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 30 October 1913. It was claimed in the *Evening Mail*, that were 'only two larger halls in the kingdom', of which the Albert Hall was probably the largest.
[90] *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 30 October 1913. Before Law ascended the platform he received a telegram from Geoffrey Robinson (the editor of the *Times*) addressed to 'Law Ice Rink, Wallsend', which read: 'May I respectfully urge you to omit Majuba analogy.' Telegram to BL, Rink, Wallsend on Tyne, from Geoffrey Robinson. HLRO, BLP/30/3/69.
[91] *Belfast Weekly News*, 6 November 1913
[92] *Newcastle Weekly Ch*ronicle, 1 November 1913
[93] *Times*, 1 November 1913
[94] LOL 395 'Enniskillen True Blues', minutes, 25 October 1913. I am grateful to Professor Don MacRaild for this information.
[95] *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 30 October 1913
[96] *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 30 October 1913

accounts told of riots and injuries in Ulster, Wallsend was no Portadown.[97] There were around 90 policemen on duty, and they had liaised beforehand with the organisers to ensure that public order was maintained. As it turned out, there was no trouble at the meeting, and a satisfied Superintendent of the Wallsend police commented to the press that as well as directing a motorcade of around 140 vehicles through the tight streets of the town, he had had to contend with an estimated crowd of between 7,000 to 8,000 who had been unable to gain admittance to the rink due to a ticketing error.[98] It was fortunate that although many of these people had 'come from a considerable distance', they had 'showed remarkable restraint and went away in a quiet and orderly manner.'[99]

In fact, despite the large crowds the tenor of the whole meeting was quiet and orderly - to the chagrin of some correspondents to the local press who would have preferred a more passionate demonstration. In reporting the meeting the rabidly Unionist *Liverpool Courier* had put a buoyant spin on the proceedings by asserting that 'the audience listened with responsive gravity and earnestness.'[100] But some disagreed and blamed this subdued atmosphere on Bonar Law himself whose speech, one attendee thought, was 'terse, business-like' and lacking 'the priceless gift of imagination.'[101] What Unionism needed, according to a correspondent to the *Evening Chronicle* was 'The Chancellor of the Exchequer', because Lloyd George's 'Celtic imagination would have portrayed brilliant word pictures that would have fired the souls of the hearers.' While Carson was acknowledged as a man of quality, the writer felt even 'his star is dimmed': not least by his recent bereavement.[102] This is one of the reasons why the same author reckoned that while he had never attended 'a meeting so vast' he also could not 'call to mind any occasion when enthusiasm was so lacking.'[103] Some disagreed. "I have just returned from Bonar Law's and Carson's meeting. It was a splendid success', wrote James Hodgson in a letter to Lady Londonderry. 'The enormous drill hall was packed with a most enthusiastic and appreciative audience which never failed to seize and applaud every point that was made. Bonar Law made an excellent speech, better I thought than

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[97] See, for example, the report on the rioting on the 12 July 1912 in Belfast - the same day as Carson addressed an anti-Home Rule meeting. *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 12 July 1912.

[98] *Shields Daily News*, 30 October 1913.

[99] *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 30 October 1913

[100] *Liverpool Courier* 30 October 1913

[101] *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 31 October 1913

[102] Carson's first wife, Annette, died in 1913, in the middle of a hectic period in his legal and political careers. He was in involved in a number of high-profile legal cases at same time as he campaigning so tirelessly against Home Rule. So great were his exertions that he collapsed with acute neuritis and missed the third reading of the Home Rule Bill. See, Stewart, *Ulster Crisis*, p.75.

[103] Both letters appeared in *Evening Chronicle*, 31 October 1913. It was not just the region that showed an interest in Carson's speaking tours. This was an age of telegraph technology and stories could be sent about the country with great rapidity, thus adding to speed with which people could be informed and with which actions could develop or change. When Carson spoke in Wallsend, Sir Edward Grey was talking in Berwick-upon-Tweed. With both men saying different things about Home Rule, one local paper was proud to announce how more than 70,000 words from the two meetings were sent down the wire all over the United Kingdom: the last message was typed in at 11.30pm and the despatch just seven minutes late. *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 1 November 1913. Malcolm Fraser, a worker in Unionist central office, advised Law on the importance on providing the press with a précis of speeches beforehand, see letter from J. Malcolm Fraser to Andrew Bonar Law, 17 November 1913. HLRO, BL/30/4/39

Carson's, although the latter was very good. It was said that there were around 12,000 people there.'[104]

The complicated political geography of the North East can be divined by the fact that Law and Carson spoke at Wallsend, whereas a week later John Redmond addressed 4,000 people in Newcastle City Hall while massive crowds waited for him in the streets surrounding the Liberal Club.[105] Yet Redmond's sympathetic reception at Newcastle may well have surprised the Liverpool Irish Nationalist MP T. P. O'Connor who spoke at Jarrow earlier that same day. After denouncing the 'religious bigotry' of the Ulster campaign his analysis of Tyneside culture provides a plausible explanation for the motivations of the Wallsend torchbearers

> The Lord Mayor of Newcastle has stated himself to be the third Catholic mayor of the city. That did not signify that Newcastle was getting less Protestant than it had been. It was just as stoutly and robustly Protestant today as it ever was.[106]

There were pro-Ulster zealots elsewhere in the North East. The cement works of Major F. T. Tristram in and around Darlington and the Hartlepools in County Durham provided excellent cover for Ulster gun-running activity in the early part of 1914.[107] In the November of 1913 a large Unionist meeting was held in nearby Stockton, at which the recently unseated MP Mr Arthur Pease expressed local sympathy for Ulster.[108]

The South of Durham was one of the more hopeful Conservative areas in the County, and Darlington had been held by the Unionists until 1910,[109] and the enthusiasm of the meeting, and fervour of Pease encouraged some local Party members. 'Mr Pease is not the man lightly to put his politics before his business' wrote James Freeman, 'and there are many in Darlington & the District round who would be powerfully moved by his example, if Ulster is forced to make a last stand. We shall certainly not fold our arms in slumber if the Government ever sets the troops in motion in the North of Ireland.'[110]

It is difficult to say how representative were the opinions of Freeman among fellow Unionists, let alone the electorate, but he was certainly fanatically pro-Ulster. In a long, and slightly sycophantic, letter to Lady Londonderry, he formulated an extreme plan of action to get the government to call an election. He proposed that the 'Unionist majority' in England should conduct 'its business dealings with persons of its own way of thinking politically we should have a leaver for putting the thumbscrew on the Government.' He had been inspired by reports in the *Times* of boycotts in India and the Balkans, and confided that he had 'in mind chiefly the small tradesmen, usually Dissenters, who would

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[104] Letter from J. Hodgson to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 29 October 1913. DRO/D/Lo/C684(425)
[105] *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 4 November 1913
[106] [Newcastle] *Illustrated Chronicle*, 4 November 1913
[107] Stewart, *Ulster Crisis*, p. 101
[108] *Northern Echo*, 20 November 1913.
[109] Pugh, *Tories and the People*, p. 127; Pelling notes that considering its Nonconformist profile and industrial base, Darlington was 'somewhat more Conservative than it should have been', p. 329
[110] Letter from James Freeman to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 20 November 1913. DRO, D/Lo/C652/1

be scared to death of the loss, not of their total livelihood (which is not threatened by my scheme in intention) but of that part of it which is from Tory or Churchgoing customers.' Freeman was obviously something of a fanatic, and went on to argue that the Ulster movement required

> a first class guerrilla Leader, not claiming to be in counsels of the Leader of the Party and therefore not being bound by their conventions and understandings with the other side, could form a position of greater freedom and less responsibility go up and down the country forcing the pace against the Party in office.[111]

He recommended F. E. Smith for this role, yet this was precisely the function of Carson's political tours which he recommenced in November.

The Ulstermen looked again to Scotland, whose natural affinities with Ulster - hitherto largely dormant - were now finding new expression. In June the *Glasgow Herald* had opined that the seemingly strong support for the government in Scotland (five out of six Scottish MPs were Liberals) was illusory: in their opinion Scottish attachment to the Liberals was a matter of tradition, and that 'no one supposes that five-sixths of the Scottish people favour the repeal of the union with Ireland and the domination of the Irish protestants led by Mr Redmond's Party.'[112] Would allegiances change when Irish Home Rule was put to the people? In the autumn the *Times* sent a special correspondent to Scotland to gage the mood north of the border. He was startled to discover the platform adopted by a Mr Kidd, the Unionist candidate at a by-election at Linlithgow

> He is basing his opposition on an argument which is rarely heard in England outside of Liverpool. He stands definitely and without question for the Protestant supremacy "as a student of history, as a democrat, and as a Scotsman," and he asserts that Scotland cannot understand a phase of toleration which would hand over Ulster bound to Roman Catholicism. No candidate could make the direct appeal on religious ground unless he had the sympathy of his hearers, and I am told Mr Kidd is having good meetings and enthusiastic receptions.[113]

This cheered the pressmen from Ulster. 'Making a tour of the principal towns of Linlithgowshire', reported the *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 'a Belfast visitor could well imagine himself not in a constituency watered by the Forth but by the Lagan or the Bann. Ulster and the union is the whole Battle cry.' They were also pleased to note that at the conclusion of a speech given by Mr Kidd at the Bo'ness Hippodrome, a well known local Liberal in the audience stood up and 'declared himself as a Protestant to be a converted Unionist at the present critical juncture and called on his fellow electors to follow his example by voting for Kidd.'[114] As he had done at Altrincham, Bonar Law sent a telegram to his candidate, loaded with sectarian insinuations: '[l]et the electors of

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[111] Letter from James Freeman to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 22 December 1913. DRO, D/Lo/C652/2

[112] *Glasgow Herald*, 12 June 1913

[113] *Times*, 29 October 1913

[114] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 1 October 1913

Linlithgowshire ask themselves how they would like to be governed by a Parliament in Dublin controlled by the Ancient Order of Hibernians, to which no Protestant is admitted.'[115] (Law repeated this formula almost exactly in his message to the Unionists candidate at Mid-Lanark in December.)[116]

This sort of atmosphere had made the man from the *Times* conclude that 'an Englishman has to go to Scotland to realise the different atmosphere which surrounds the Irish question over the border ... one in which the Irish Unionists may discern signs of hope.'[117] They would have been more hopeful after the Linlithgow by-election, where Kidd lost narrowly, for at South Lanarkshire the Unionist victory in another by-election was construed by the *Times* as 'a message from the Scottish Presbyterians to their fellows in the North of Ireland.'[118]

It was intended that Carson's expedition should begin in the far north of Scotland, at Inverness, before proceeding to Aberdeen. However, urgent Belfast meetings called at short notice threatened to prevent Carson's attendance at either of these rallies. This perturbed and angered the chairman of the Scottish Unionists, Sir George Younger, who told Bonar Law that '[n]othing but sudden illness would be accepted as a reasonable excuse by those people whose expectations have been raised to fever pitch and will be certain to resent his absence.' Carson was a huge attraction and Younger went on to entreat Law to get Carson to Inverness at least as 'the demand for tickets for those meetings has been enormous and elaborate arrangements have been made for bringing the delegates from the neighbouring constituencies. They are coming to Inverness from Wick and Skye & all to see and hear Carson.'[119] This was predictable. Following the British government's controversial decision to endow the Roman Catholic Seminary at Maynooth in 1851, the electors of Wick burghs appended their names to a petition which described '"Popery" as intolerant and persecuting, the chief cause of degradation and turbulence in Ireland.'[120] And in 1886, 35 per cent of the electors of Inverness burghs had signed a petition against Gladstone's Home Rule bill - the highest number of signatures in the Highlands.[121] This information may have informed Carson's response as he eventually answered Younger's appeal, and, after some rescheduling, Ulster's leader made time to go to Inverness, though the Aberdonian Unionists had to make do with ex-Prime Minister Arthur Balfour.[122]

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[115] *Scotsman*, 6 November 1913

[116] 'Would the electors of mid-Lanark themselves like to be placed under the power of a parliament controlled by a secret society to which no Protestant is admitted?' See copy of a letter from Bonar Law to Mr Watson, 8 December 1913. HLRO, BL/33/6/110

[117] *Times*, 29 October 1913

[118] *Times*, 15 December 1913

[119] Letter from Sir George Younger to Andrew Bonar Law, 27 October 1913. BLP, 30/3/59

[120] Frank Wallis, 'Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Victorian Britain, Theory and Discipline', *Journal of Religion and Society*, 7 (2005), p. 8

[121] Catriona Burness, *'Strange Associations': The Irish Question and the making of Scottish Unionism, 1886-1918* (East Linton: Tuckwell, 2003), p. 55

[122] Younger 'made a personal appeal to Balfour' to speak in Carson's place as 'disappointment was so acute' in Aberdeen, see letter from Sir George Younger to Andrew Bonar Law, 30 October 1913. HLRO, BL/30/3/73

The very remoteness of the Highland capital made the anti-Home Rule meeting in the Inverness Skating Rink, the town's largest building, an enormous local event. 'The greatest political demonstration that has ever been witnessed in the North of Scotland', asserted the *Inverness Courier*.[123] As Younger had described, the pull of Carson was felt throughout the Highlands, and the Unionists had much to thank their network of Party workers who mobilised such impressive support, which came from as far north as Dingwall and Tain, from as far south as Newtonmore, and as far east as Keith, 'whilst goodly numbers came from Strome Ferry and the Isle of Skye in the west.'[124] Indeed, a correspondent from Inverness-shire wrote to Carson to single out a Major-General D. R. Cameron of Dingwall who, aside from 'doing very good work for the Unionist cause in his own part of the country', has organised a contingent of 300 Ross and Cromarty men who will travel with him by special train to your meeting at Inverness on Wednesday.'[125]

The local press reported that specially chartered trains, and munificent motorists, had facilitated the presence of a crowd of 4,500, who, for three hours before the meeting began, slowly filed in to the electrically lit, and union jack-festooned, hall, which was 'bright and comfortable all things considered.'[126] After a lusty rendition of 'Land of Hope and Glory' led by the Inverness Unionist Choir, the Mackintosh of Mackintosh, Chief of the Clan Chatlan, reminded the audience that 'true sons of the Gael as they were, kindred in race and religion to the Ulstermen were resolute in their determination that the country should be further consulted on the Home Rule Bill.'[127] Carson was less windy. He adopted a tack that he often did in Scotland: by presenting Home Rule as being above Party politics. He 'did not ask any man to give up his political creed or to desert his political Party' but that they must 'sink all their differences to maintain one United Kingdom for the benefit of the whole empire (great cheering).'[128]

From here Carson progressed south to Perth, a town described by Pelling as being 'too remote from direct contacts with Ireland to be much worried [by Irish Home Rule].'[129] Yet interest in Carson's arrival was striking. Rather like at Inverness, the local press was moved to write that 'by universal consent, the meeting organised by Perth Unionists on Thursday evening was the greatest political demonstration ever held in the city.'[130] This second Ulster tour was really striking a chord, as the *Perthshire Constitutional* explained '[g]reater men than Sir Edward Carson have visited Perth without evoking the more than a very ordinary interest.'[131]The Inverness policy of persuading erstwhile Liberals that Ulster's cause was just was reiterated by the Marquis of Tullibardine,[132] the chair of the

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[123] *Inverness Courier*, 7 November 1913
[124] *Scotsman*, 6 November 1913
[125] Anonymous letter to Sir Edward Carson, 4 November 1913 PRONI, D/989/A/8/2/19/6; Major General Cameron was also supported by the energetic Miss Johnston sent by the UWUC to Ross-shire, Urquhart, *Minutes*, p. 59
[126] *Inverness Courier*, 7 November 1913
[127] *Scotsman*, 6 November 1913
[128] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 6 November 1913
[129] Pelling, *Social Geography*, p. 391
[130] *Perthshire Advertiser*, 8 November 1913
[131] *Perthshire Constitutional and Journal*, 10 November 1913
[132] Tullibardine was MP for Perth and heir to the Duke of Argyll.

meeting, who asked whether 'the people of Scotland, for the sake of a mere Party game, were not going to sacrifice those who were blood of their blood and kith of their kin?'[133]

As Carson's speech was in progress an overflow meeting was addressed by James Craig, and the evenings proceedings were concluded with a procession back to the Ulster Party's hotel. Indeed, the scene in the streets 'in point of size and enthusiasm unprecedented in the history of the Fair City'.[134]Such enthusiasm and fervour moved one local paper to editorialise gravely that 'there cannot be civil war in Ireland without the bloodshed speedily spreading to this part of the kingdom as well.'[135]The growing seriousness of Scottish support delighted Carson who told the *Times* that he and his colleagues were 'greatly pleased with the Scottish demonstrations and the sympathy which their appeal has evoked in this part of the kingdom.'[136] And he confided privately to Lady Londonderry that '[w]e have had splendid meetings in Scotland but it is a "dog's life" and I am worn out.'[137] Addressing such enormous demonstrations certainly must have been tiring, and he still had one more rally to attend, this time at Dundee.

Dundee was staunchly Liberal. When Winston Churchill was invited to stand for parliament in the town in 1908 it was described to him as 'a seat for life.'[138] This was a fact broadly known. 'Dundee has been hitherto looked upon as a pillar of Scottish radicalism', noted the *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 'but the demo which roused a serious people to heights of enthusiasm showed that the bulk of the population are in sympathy with and responsive to the appeal of Ulster.'[139] This may have been true, but it should be stressed that the religious divide was less pronounced on the Tay than it was on the Clyde. There was some working class Unionism in Dundee and neighbouring St. Andrews,[140] but for one thing there were no where near as many Irish Protestants in Dundee and historians have noted that as a consequence organised anti-Catholicism in the form of the Orange Order did not flourish.[141] It has even been suggested too that the large numbers of women employed in the city's jute mills may have tempered any potential friction.[142]

The time of Carson's arrival in the city was kept secret, and he arrived in the city largely unnoticed. Nevertheless, much was made in the local press of the contingents who were arriving steadily from the hinterlands of Tayside and beyond. 'Buses and char-a-bancs brought admirers', reported the *Dundee Advertiser*, 'many motor cars were requisitioned,

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[133] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 7 November 1913
[134] *Perthshire Constitutional and Journal*, 10 November 1913
[135] *Perthshire Advertiser*, 8 November 1913
[136] *Times*, 7 November 1913
[137] Letter from Sir Edward Carson to the Marchioness of Londonderry (writing from Perth) no date (1913) PRONI, D/2846/1/1/157
[138] D. G. Southgate, 'Politics in Dundee', S. J. Jones, eds, *Dundee and district* (Dundee: British Association, 1968), p. 348
[139] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 8 November 1913
[140] Pelling, *Social Geography*, p. 392
[141] W. Walker, 'Irish Immigrants in Scotland: their priests, politics, and parochial life', *Historical Journal* (1972), p. 655; Gallagher, *Uneasy Peace*, p. 32
[142] W. Walker, *Juteopolis: Dundee and its Textile Workers, 1885-1923* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1979), p. 121

and the special trains which were run from Cupar and other places in Fife brought hundreds of people.'[143]These vehicles deposited their human cargo in the vicinity of the King's Theatre, and Cowgate, St. Andrew's Street, and Murraygate were thronged with ticket holders milling around until the doors opened at 7 o'clock. The hours of waiting were enlivened by the Eighth Ward Unionist Choir who 'sang with zest and expression' a distinctly patriotic selection, which included '"Scots wha hae", "Land of Hope and Glory", "The Dear Little Shamrock", and "Rule Britannia" the refrain of which was chorused by the vast assemblage.'[144] Taking their cue from an enthusiastic lady in one of the boxes many in the audience rose and waved union jacks, then Carson appeared, in a scene described with some extravagance by the *People's Journal*

> Hardly had the echoes of that chorus died away when Sir Edward Carson appeared upon the platform. Dressed entirely in black ... with his shoulders squared like a soldier's, his underlip stiffly protruding, his small eyes hard and flashing as the diamond in his black tie, he moved across the platform with the air of a bulldog going into action. He has the bulldog jaw; the bulldog's air of grim self-confidence ... Then 4,000 voices were raised in the hymn 'O God our help in ages past.' It is a hymn which has echoed over many a battlefield. It is the hymn which Oliver Cromwell and his Ironsides sang as they rode forth to meet the forces of King Charles.[145]

(If Asquith was King Charles, then some of his cavaliers were present. The President, Chairman, and chief members of the local Liberal Party committee were intrigued enough to attend, and sat in an opera box.)[146] Carson thanked the audience for their welcome and asked them to stand 'remember that this is not a political question ... we are not asking anyone to give up one jot or tittle of their views but we are asking them to rally round men whose liberties, civil and religious, are threatened', and he was sure that he would soon find 'Scotsmen of whatever Party at our back.'[147]

While Carson was at Dundee, attempting to cut across Party lines, James Craig was covering their base by attending the annual soiree and concert of the Grand Orange Lodge of Scotland in the Glasgow City Hall.[148] The following week, Carson had intended to speak in Glasgow, but ill health had forced James Craig to deputise which diluted enthusiasm and lowered the crowd at the St Andrew's Hall to 2,000.[149] Carson constantly worried about his health, and this latest Scottish tour had wearied him (he told his audience at Dundee that he was glad it was nearly over as 'it had been a great strain').[150] He also complained to Lady Londonderry that he was 'overtired after the Scotch tour and all the railway journeys ... but it was an unqualified success' what cheered him still

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[143] *Dundee Advertiser*, 8 *November* 1913
[144] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 8 November 1913
[145] *The People's Journal*, 8, November 1913
[146] Colvin, *Carson*, p. 231
[147] *Scotsman*, 8 November 1913
[148] *Glasgow Herald*, 8 November 1913
[149] *Daily Telegraph*, 14 November 1913
[150] *Dundee Advertiser*, 8 November 1913

further was the recent by-election victories, or as he put it 'and then came Linlithgow and Reading!'[151]

Although the Scottish tour had mustered thousands of supporters we should not presume that fervent pro-Ulster sentiment was confined to Scotland. Linlithgow had been won, but some commentators had thought it of note that 'in the three by election contests begun in widely separated parts of Great Britain - in Reading, Keighley, and West Lothian - Home Rule [is] well to the front.'[152]The arrival of Lord Lascelles in Keighley, with his 'staff of canvassers and speakers in defence of the Union, with a motor-van and magic lantern'[153] was ultimately fruitless (with Lord Stanhope ruminating amusingly that 'I doubt our winning the seat. [Lascelles'] appearance is against him – he looks a regular mug').[154] But the story at Reading was very different. There the Unionists won, but it was perhaps the events that surrounded the election that were as significant. 'The Liberals are not faring very well in their attempt to beat up a land agitation in Reading', claimed the *Times*. 'They seem to have realized that Ireland cannot be altogether out of account at this election.'[155]

Propagandists from both the Irish Nationalist and Unionist parties had descended on Berkshire, with the town's Corn Exchange witnessing – on the same day – T. P. O'Connor MP denouncing the Orangemen, and Protestant clergymen from Ulster reminding the townsfolk of the recent litany of 'Catholic outrages' in Ireland.'[156] When on the evening of this same Saturday evening the Home Rule Council held a meeting by the Queen's statue, outside the town hall the *Times* reported that 'an attack led, it is alleged by a number of farmers coming from the market, was made on the van from which the addresses were being delivered. The conveyance was overturned and the meeting was broke up in disorder.'[157] The local press went into more detail. According to the *Berkshire Chronicle*, one of the Home Rule orators had made the mistake of responding to an irate questioner, who asked 'Who helped the Boers?' by defending the Nationalist attitude to the South African War - 'this especially roused the opposition of some of the younger men – farmers and others', some of whom climbed onto the platform amid shouts of 'get back to your Nationalist traitors.'[158]

The Liberal *Reading Standard* was appalled. 'The Reading Tories ... behave[ed] like hooligans', and they thought it shameful to hear shouts of 'Go back to your own --- country.' In the melee, Kelly, the Irish orator, had his coat tails pulled and there was

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[151] Letter from Sir Edward Carson to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 12 November 1913 PRONI, D/2846/1/1/108

[152] [Newcastle] *Evening Chronicle*, 24 October 1913

[153] *Times*, 27 October 1913; the UWUC also sent help Keighley, Urquhart, *Minutes*, p. 94

[154] Photographs of his marriage to George V's daughter Princess Mary bear this out; see letter from the Earl of Stanhope to Lord Willoughby de Broke, 3 November 1913. HLRO, WB/6/6. The incumbent, Sir Stanley Buckmaster, was universally popular and respected, and the Unionists knew it - see letter from H. Pike Pease to Andrew Bonar Law, 12 November 1913, BLP, 30/4/29

[155] *Times*, 7 November 1913

[156] *Reading Chronicle*, 31 October 1913; the UWUC had also been active in the town, see Urquhart, *Minutes*, p. 92

[157] *Times*, 27 October 1913

[158] *Berkshire Chronicle*, 31 October 1913

some dispute as to whether the wagon was overturned or driven away in disorder.[159] Aside from this farcical episode, some observers had some more serious complaints. C. J. O'Donnell, an Irish born Liberal candidate for a seat in Hampshire, had visited the town to support his colleague Mr Gooch, and had written to the *Times* in disgust that

> The Home Rule question is being fought out by less reputable and more reprehensible means. The Conservative Party is practically basing itself on sectarian animosities ... I did not hear the familiar Orange war-cry, "To Hell with the Pope," but its spirit was there, a rabid sectarianism in full blast. A Catholic voter complained to me that priests and even nuns were not spared.[160]

Some Unionists saw in the Liberal defeat at Reading a significant change of mood in the country. 'The country will not have this Home Rule Bill', was the stark conclusion of a private letter from Captain Leslie Wilson, the victorious candidate, to Bonar Law.[161] 'Yesterday was a great day for Ulster and I congratulate you most heartily on the results', wrote Sir George Holmes to Lady Londonderry. 'It must be most satisfactory to all of you in the heart of the movement to see England and Scotland waking up from their long sleep of apathy.'[162] These remarks echoes that of H. S. Staveley Hill, a correspondent to the *Times*, who observed that 'it was at one time supposed that there was apathy in the Unionist ranks in England ... no such charge can be levied against the people of this island.'[163]

We have never seen these letters cited in any study of Edwardian politics, yet to many contemporary observers there was a seeming inevitability about the awakening of public opposition to Home Rule, and this was particularly true within the Unionist community of Ulster. It was around this time that, at a private meeting, Bonar Law admitted to Asquith the electoral importance of '"the Orange Card" – without it he thought the Unionists would lose again.'[164] The card having been played and the consequences considered, Law perceived a virtuous circle that the Unionists in Britain and Ulster could both benefit from. 'It was really the certainty of British support which made the strength of the Ulster resistance',[165] he told Balfour, and Carson would pick up on this in his own speeches - declaring at Leeds in June that 'men have said to me as I walked through the town of Belfast: "Sir Edward, England will never do it."'[166]

Unionists were beginning to apprehend the virtue of a simple, straightforward message of support for Ulster's exclusion from any Irish parliament. 'The Electorate is very like a common jury', wrote J. S. Sandars, '& a verdict is nearly always extracted from the letter

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[159] *Reading Standard*, 29 October 1913
[160] *Times*, 3 November 1913
[161] Letter from Leslie Wilson to Andrew Bonar Law, 9 Nov 1913. HLRO, BL/30/4/20
[162] Letter from Sir George Holmes to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 9 November 1913 PRONI, D/2846/1/7/31
[163] *Times*, 18 July 1913
[164] Roy Jenkins, *Asquith* (London: Collins, 1964), p. 350
[165] Letter from Andrew Bonar Law to Arthur Balfour, 15 October 1913. HLRO, BL/33/6/80
[166] *Yorkshire Post* 16 June 1913

by the forcible repetition of a single point.'[167] Alfred Milner wrote that 'it is neither possible nor desirable to distract public attention just now from the Ulster crisis', and, he added 'we all ought to keep people's mind steadily fixed on that ... we could not allow them to be coerced without doing something to help them more than talking.'[168]

The need for directness was picked up on in a number of letters written in the autumn of 1913. One Irish Unionist thought that if only 'Edward Carson's admirable speeches were boiled down to leaflet form the British democracy would realise how shameful is the betrayal contemplated by the Government', and that the British public would respond like Tennyson who had told Queen Victoria that he would prefer to 'be in his own grave, beyond sight and hearing, when an English army fired upon the royalists of Ulster [sic].'[169] More sinisterly, the Rt. Hon. Frederick S. Wrench, wrote from Dublin to Carson suggesting that 'at such a crisis to put forward prominently Roman Catholics like the Duke of Norfolk, and befog the electors minds with Tariff Reform, is very serious.' His advice was that only by rousing 'the spirit that was in the defenders of the Walls of Derry that you are going to win and nothing else.'[170]

It seems that a new emphasis on Ulster became official Unionist policy. Party panjandrums like Steel Maitland and Lord Edward Talbot began urging upon certain Unionist MPs 'the great desirability on every occasion on which you speak of referring to the grave situation of the Irish question.'[171] For some the case for supporting Ulster was overwhelming, and played into Unionist hands: 'on Party grounds, which one cannot afford wholly to neglect, it is the best card the Tory Party ever had', wrote the Devon MP, A. C. Morrison Bell, and 'if our fellows are such idiots that they cannot see the moral and practical value of the Ulster position, then they simply deserve all that they get.'[172] The leadership recognised its value: Steel Maitland recognised its value and told Lord Derby that 'just now, attention is being concentrated on Home Rule',[173] and one Unionist MP wrote in his diary that 'Bonar Law has been so engrossed with Ireland.'[174] This was illustrated by the enormous banner displayed behind the leader at the Unionist conference at Norwich, which read 'RALLY ROUND THE FLAG THAT ULSTER HOLDS ALOFT.'[175] A sense of the popularity of Bonar Law's hard-line position on Ulster had among the Party faithful gleaned from the response to his avowal that the

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[167] Letter from J. S. Sandars to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 18th September 1913. DRO, D/Lo/C671(90)(i)

[168] Letter from Viscount Milner to the Earl Roberts, 30 Oct 1913, BLO MS Milner Dep 16 (211)

[169] Letter from John Mulhall, Irish Unionist, Dublin to Lady Londonderry, 6 October 1913. PRONI, D/2846/1/7/42

[170] Private letter from the Rt. Hon. Frederick S. Wrench to Sir Edward Carson, 14 November 1913. PRONI, D/1507/A/4/14

[171] Confidential letter from Lord Edward Talbot, and Arthur Steel Maitland to Major A. C. Morrison-Bell, 30 Oct 1913. PRONI, D/1507/A/4/11

[172] Letter from Major AC Morrison-Bell to Arthur Steel Maitland, 31 October 1913. PRONI, D/1507/A/4/12

[173] Letter from Arthur Steel-Maitland to the Earl of Derby, 10 November 1913. LRO, 920 DER (17) 31/1

[174] Diary entry, 13 November 1913. John Ramsden, ed., *Real old Tory Politics*, p. 67

[175] *Illustrated Chronicle*, 14 November 1913

Party would back Ulster in any confrontation with the government '[t]he announcement was met with great cheering, the audience rising on mass to sing Rule Britannia.'[176]

The nascent volunteer movement in Britain demonstrated the menacing turn that matters were taking in late 1913. The *Belfast News-Letter* reported that in Essex a leading London shipping merchant 'and one of the best known men in boating and yachting circles in the United Kingdom' had placed advertisements in the local press calling for volunteers 'to support the loyal Protestants of Ulster.' He was supported by a local Territorial officer who had distributed hundreds of posters across South East Essex. These posters, which were headed by a Union Jack, read

ONE KING
ONE FLAG
ONE PARLIAMENT

Men who have served their King and country in the Army, Navy, or volunteers and who are prepared to support the Loyal Protestants of Ulster in the last extremity, are invited to send their names and addresses to –

E. B. Tredwen,
32, Cobham Road,
Westcliff-on-Sea
Organising Secretary for South East Essex

'We understand that a large response has already been made to the invitation to help Ulstermen fight the Battle of the Union', noted the *News-Letter*.[177] This echoed what Willoughby de Broke was privately informing fellow Unionists at the time. 'We now have agents in practically every constituency in England, Scotland and Wales who are busy enrolling men who are ready to go over to Ireland supposing the Bill passes without a general election', though he added 'of course many of us do not hold ourselves bound by an election which may be won on some different issue.'[178] And in response to concerns from the moderate Lord Cecil over the likelihood of civil war, he reasoned that that the best way to prevent such conflict was to back up their words with the threat of 'a large force from England going over to Belfast to reinforce the Ulstermen.'[179] This escalation of pro-Ulster activity was endorsed in some sections of the Tory press. On 11 November 1913 the *Times* published a new BLSUU 'Manifesto', striking in its martial tone and quasi-religious fervour

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[176] *Eastern Daily Press*, 15 November 1913
[177] *Belfast News Letter*, 7 October, 1913
[178] Letter from Lord Willoughby de Broke to Andrew Bonar Law, 11 September 1913. HLRO, BL/30/2/10. He also added that he hoped to give Law 'some ammunition from our [BLSUU] agents in the shape of a meeting of 300 of them to be held in London, that will show the country that your Blenheim pledge has chrystallized [sic].'
[179] Willoughby de Broke to Cecil, 29 October 1913, see Rodner, 'Leaguers', p. 72

> We call upon all able-bodied fellow-countrymen who think the Ulstermen are arming in a righteous cause to enrol themselves and prepare to reinforce the ranks of the men who are going to risk their lives for the integrity of the Empire as well as their own civil and religious liberties secured to them by the British Constitution.[180]

This call to service received a responsive echo in the Tory heartland of the West Midlands. 'The British League ... is going remarkably strong in Birmingham', wrote Broke to Carson enclosing a letter from one of his more enthusiastic supporters.[181] The enthusiast in question, W. H. Nightingale, described how drilling had commenced in the city, and that they were fortunate to have a number of volunteers with previous military experience, including a corporal in the Warwickshire Yeomanry, 'They have decided to call themselves Company A. West Birmingham Division ... and we hope to start a company in each parliamentary division,' he wrote, and he hoped to have in a few weeks '1,000 soldiers of civil and religious liberty. The time for mere talk is over.'[182]

It was apposite therefore that the next large scale Ulster meeting would take place in arch-Unionist Birmingham - doubly so in the opinion of Neville Chamberlain whose political horizons were then merely municipal rather than ministerial.[183] He informed his Party leader that since the incapacitation of his father local Unionists had become 'apathetic and inert' and it has been difficult to fill meetings. Would Law join Carson on the platform at Birmingham? To be sure Carson would 'draw a big audience', but it was Law alone who could restore 'courage and confidence' to the local Party with an exposition of the official Party line on 'things that touch the midland working men, - on wages, employment, insurance, housing, emigration, and imperialism.'[184] It is debatable whether Law achieved this, as the meeting resembled more of a festival of support for Ulster than a sober disquisition into Unionist policy - moving the Liberal *Birmingham Gazette* to decry his performance as being merely 'a bitter Orange attack on Mr Redmond.'[185] The London *Daily Chronicle* agreed, arguing that Law's performance failed to edify and was indicative of a man who has 'envenom[ed] controversy' by using 'Ulster ... transparently as a tool' to further Party ends.'[186]

Those who were to speak at the Birmingham Hippodrome – Law, Carson, and Austen Chamberlain – first stayed the night at the citadel of Midland Conservatism: Highbury, Joseph Chamberlain's villa in Edgbaston. The Belfast press reported that it had been suggested that this triumvirate should be 'escorted [from there] to the meeting by a body of processionists' though this never came to pass.[187] This was Law's first speaking

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[180] *Times*, 11 November 1913; the *Morning Post* published the same appeal under the headline 'A Call For Service', see the *Morning Post*, 18 November 1913

[181] Letter from Lord Willoughby de Broke to Sir Edward Carson, 18 Nov 1913 PRONI, CP/D/1507/A/4/16

[182] Letter from W.H. Nightingale (Honorary agent, British League, 3 New St, Birmingham), to Lord Willoughby de Broke, 17 Oct 1913, PRONI, CP/D/1507/A/4/10

[183] Pelling, *Social Geography*, pp. 180-4; Birmingham was another city with a large Irish population, see Chinn, Carl, *Birmingham Irish: Making Our Mark* (Birmingham: Birmingham City Council, 2003)

[184] Letter from Neville Chamberlain to Andrew Bonar Law, 8 September 1913 HLRO, BL/30/2/9

[185] *Birmingham Gazette*, 22 November 1913

[186] *Daily Chronicle*, 22 November 1913

[187] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 22 November 1913

The criticism of Bonar Law from the Liberal press missed the point. His policy on Ireland was one that avoided detail in public and stuck to populist tub-thumping; for he knew that an amicable solution to the Irish question would remove the Unionist's strongest suit. As he explained to Lord Lansdowne, 'from a Party point of view there is the disadvantage that Home Rule moved out of the way, our chance of winning an election is very probably diminished.'[192] And although he conceded a week later, in a private letter to the editor of the *Scotsman*, that the British public were 'so sick of the whole Irish question that they would vote in favour of trying a [Home Rule] experiment so long as the Ulster difficulty was solved', this is not the same as saying that the British were unmoved by anti-Irish rhetoric and propaganda. For in the same letter he stated that if a compromise were found that seemed to betray the Southern Irish Unionists then there would be 'such an outcry from the south and west would have a very violent echo in England.'[193]

When a month later Walter Long told Austen Chamberlain that the leader had made the Tories 'Diehard' over Ulster, or that Viscount Milner had written a month earlier that 'there is only one road of salvation for unionists ... it is to shout "Ulster, Ulster" all the time'.[194] This is interesting not so much for the insight into Law's mindset, or even internal Tory politics, but for our understanding of British popular political culture in 1913.

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[192] Letter from Andrew Bonar Law to the Marquess of Lansdowne, 11 Oct 1913. HLRO, BL/33/6/78
[193] Copy of a letter from Andrew Bonar Law to J. P. Croal, 18 October 1913, HLRO, BL/33/6/84
[194] Letter from Walter Long to Austen Chamberlain, 24 November 1913 - see Evans, 'Redefinition', p. 15; letter from Viscount Milner to F. S. Oliver, 23 Oct 1913, BLO, MS Milner Dep 13 (42-3). Milner also wrote that 'an impasse' over Ulster would save the Unionist Party, see letter from Milner to Colonel Denison, 25 Oct 1913. BLO MS Milner Dep 40 (160-3)

engagement in the city since becoming Unionist leader, and the *Birmingham Daily Mail* though that his unfamiliarity with the city and meeting's size meant that it lacked the intimacy of Joe Chamberlain's much-missed 'Bingley Hall gatherings' as 'each side was just a little cautious and reserved in making the acquaintance of a new friend.'[188]

At Carson's request the meeting had began with a novel tribute to Ulster in the form of a song with a distinctly imperial flavour, as it was 'written by a Scotsman, composed by an Irishman, would be sung by an Australian, and Englishmen would provide the chorus.' The first of the 3 verses and the chorus ran as follows:

Steadfast rank and glittering steel,
Strong to guard a nation's weal,
Who dare crush us 'neath the heel
Of hired disloyalty.
Red the gauntlet, Ulster's hand,
Red the warning o'er the land,
Firm in union still we stand,
And Ulster shall be free.

Refrain:
Ulster for the right,
Ulster know your might,
Raise your hand and guard your land,
With Ulster for the right.

The *Belfast Telegraph* reported that the chorus 'went with a fine swing [and] the assemblage kept up the refrain on their own account, and gave it frequent repetition' which they followed with a rendition of 'O God our help in ages past.'[189] In anticipation of Ian Paisley, Carson declared memorably that Ulster would 'Never! Never! Never!' secede from the Union. According to the local press, this had a profound effect on the audience, who, as at Wallsend, refrained from much shouting and cheering. 'The effect was almost startling', mused a reporter from the *Birmingham Daily Post*, 'I do not think that I have seen an audience whose mind worked faster with tense and painful yet approving thought.'[190] What they approved of Bonar Law's usual anti-Irish tirades. 'I myself have always tried to do as little as possible to increase bitterness in Ireland', he declared, before denouncing John Redmond for speeches he had made 12 years ago. The Nationalist leader had said that 'the Corporation of Dublin had degraded the national capital of Ireland by debasing itself at the feet of Queen Victoria ("shame"). No wonder the people of Ulster were prepared to face anything rather than be ruled by men whose loyalty was of that kind (cheers).'[191]

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[188] *Birmingham Daily Mail*, 22 November 1913
[189] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 22 November 1913
[190] *Birmingham Daily Post*, 22 November 1913
[191] *Birmingham Daily Mail*, 22 November 1913

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The Transfiguration of Sir Edward Carson:
Unionist demonstrations reach their high-water mark

He [Carson] is the sort of character which above all others ought to win the sympathy of young men. He has a personality more magnetic I think than that of any public man I know.

Letter from Andrew Bonar Law to an Edinburgh Unionist, 17 March 1914. HLRO, BL/34/2/40

By November 1913 there seemed to be a feeling abroad in the land that 'England *qua* England is opposed to Home Rule'.[1] The Ulster Unionist Council Yearbook spoke of 1913 as a period of 'greatly increased interest ... in the Home Rule question.'[2] One contemporary commentary on the 'Ulster Crisis' written as early as 1914 attempted to explain this change of mood. In it the author confirms that apathy over the Ulster question had once been dominant, yet by the end of 1913 a change in atmosphere could be dimly perceived

> This mood endured till the late autumn, when it suddenly changed. Why it changed, or at what precise moment would be difficult to say; but clearly at Christmastide things were not where they had been at All-Hallow-Mass. The easy incredulity of the man in the street had given way to a vague anxiety. The unruffled and swaggering confidence of Liberal partisans had been breached at various points by misgiving. Mockery of the Covenanters was no longer sung in hearty chorus, though it still grated upon the ear – scattered unwelcome and discordant – like the shouts and snatches of belated roisterers staggering homewards after the midnight chimes.[3]

Unionists liked to argue that this was because the British public had finally realised that Home Rule was an affront to British democracy - but senior Liberals disagreed, and some expressed apprehension about the twitching of the sectarian impulse in British politics.

'There was throughout the realm today an attempt today to revive the hatred of the middle ages between Protestants and Roman Catholics', declared Hamar Greenwood MP at the opening of a Catholic Church fete in Sunderland, concluding that 'the Roman

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[1] Sir Henry Wilson recording conversation with Sir John French, 4 November 1913, Colvin, *Carson*, p. 244
[2] *The Ulster Unionist Council and Ulster Union of Constitutional Associations Year Book ... 1914* (Belfast 1914), p. 55. PRONI, (Smythe Papers) D/972/17
[3] Galley proof of a book or Pamphlet entitled *The Ulster Crisis* (Edinburgh: R & R Clark, 1914), p. 7. PRONI, D/1507/A/6/41

Catholics of this country had a hard and heavy burden to bear.'[4] In places like Merseyside such a revival would have grave consequences. Indeed, it was about this time that newspapers like the *Liverpool Courier* began printing alarming editorials about the likelihood of violent expressions of proletarian solidarity with Ulster. The paper claimed that if the government took military action against Ulster then they would have to deal not only 'with the active resentment of the British Army, but with the active anger of the democracy of Liverpool and of Lancashire' for they were certain that

> the first blood spilt in Belfast would raise a storm in the large towns of England and Scotland ... the problem of the Protestant working classes of Liverpool, and Glasgow, of Manchester and Barrow and Newcastle would be a difficult one to handle. We are afraid that the position in our English towns would be even worse than in Belfast for the men there are organised, and they have been taught to obey orders in a military fashion. We don't care even to imagine the outburst of indignation which in Liverpool may incite the democracy to march to the tune of a more sinister protest than that of passing resolutions at mass demonstrations.[5]

What is more, when Archibald Salvidge addressed a LWMCA meeting in Liverpool on 1 December 1913, he told the faithful that even his most prejudiced opponent would concede that he had more opportunities than most of judging the 'intensity of feeling upon this question among the working classes, and I say solemnly that not only in Liverpool, but in very many of the constituencies of Lancashire and Cheshire, there exists on this matter a determined and fixed resolve', and that Ulster will be backed 'until the bitter end.'[6] Salvidge was prone to bluster, but in this case his diagnosis may well have been accurate, as he expressed privately his deep concern to Lord Derby that he hoped a peaceful settlement would be arrived at in Ireland 'if not I am afraid the position in Liverpool and surrounding constituencies would be serious, in fact it might easily turn out to be a second Ulster.'[7] Possibly with this in mind, the Unionists saw fit to capitalise on this new mood, and at the end of November Carson wrote to tell Lady Londonderry that 'on Tuesday I go on the English tour and it will be a great strain.'[8]

He went first to Sheffield. The steel city of South Yorkshire, with its small units of production and numerous munitions factories had made it promising Conservative territory, returning Unionists in three of its five constituencies throughout 1885-1914, and four in 1900, before eventually losing ground to Labour.[9] The local Conservatives did much to cultivate a strong working class base, particularly among the skilled workers of

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[4] *Northern Echo*, 21 November 1913
[5] *Liverpool Courier*, 1 December 1913
[6] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 2 December 1913
[7] Letter from Archibald Salvidge to the 17th Earl of Derby, 6 December 1913, LRO, 920 DER(17) 33/SAL 1913.
[8] Letter from Sir Edward Carson to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 26 November 1913 PRONI, D/2846/1/1/110
[9] Pugh, *Tories and the People*, p. 121; E. R. Whickham, *Church and People in an Industrial City* (London: Lutterworth, 1957), pp. 135ff, 159f; H. K. Hawson, Sheffield, the Growth of a City, 1893-1926 (Sheffield: Northend, 1968), p. 286ff., S. Pollard, *History of Labour in Sheffield* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1959), p. 197ff.

the city – aided in no small part by their vigorous upholding of the drink interest, and Pelling has noted that there were still large numbers of working men voting Unionist in Sheffield in the Edwardian period.[10] Consequently, reportage in the local Liberal press of Carson's visit had a certain weary resignation. 'No effort was spared to give the jingo imperial ring to the meeting', noted the *Sheffield Daily Independent* in a sketch dripping with scepticism. They thought that despite Carson's enthusiastic welcome, the event had been a failure. Carson's speech was that 'of a tired man', and the salvation of the meeting lay in the hecklers who when Carson declared 'that Sheffield had always stood by the union', cried 'rot!' and the uproar that followed caused an embarrassing hiatus in his address.[11] No mention of numbers was made in the *Independent*, though the Tory *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* claimed that there were 6,000 in the city's Norfolk Drill Hall. '[Carson] roused the gathering to a pitch of enthusiasm that one had scarcely expected at the outset from its character', intoned their reporter before proceeding to make a claim that was becoming a commonplace in the reportage of Carson's rallies

> For a large section of the meeting consisted of business and middle class people who do not go to such affairs to applaud but to listen and generally express their approval in the quietest possible fashion. It is an apparent phlegm that may easily be mistaken for indifference.[12]

Whether this was wishful thinking is unclear, but it must be said that Carson's Sheffield meeting was certainly not the most effusive that he had ever addressed.

From Sheffield Carson made the short journey across the Pennines to Manchester. On the day before his appearance at the New Theatre it was announced that at the conclusion of the meeting, 'Carson will be escorted to the Midland Hotel by the L & N W Railway (Liverpool Road) brass band', and a few of the more expensive tickets 'at Half a crown and upwards remain unsold.'[13] This is interesting, as the Tories had long established footholds in the poorer districts of Manchester - even in the Railway ward of Ardwick where the politics of drink and religious education gained them support in municipal elections.[14] In places like Salford and Collyhurst, the combination of the largest concentrations of Irish in the city and an active working class Orange Order made them centres of ethno-sectarian conflict.[15] Indeed, Disraeli was inducted as an honorary member of a Salford Orange Lodge after making a speech in Manchester in 1872.[16]

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[10] Helen Mathers, 'The City of Sheffield, 1893-1926', Clyde Binfield, Richard Childs, Roger Harper, David Hey, David Martin, Geoffrey Tweeddale, eds, *The History of the City of Sheffield, 1843-1993* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), p. 68; Pelling, *Social Geography*, p. 233

[11] *Sheffield Daily Independent*, 3 December 1913

[12] *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 3 December 1913

[13] *Manchester Courier*, 3 December 1913

[14] Adams, 'Labour Vanguard', p. 30

[15] S. Fielding, 'A separate culture? Irish communities in working class Manchester and Salford, c.1890-1939', A. Davis and S. Fielding, eds, *Workers' Worlds. Cultures and Communities in Manchester and Salford, 1880-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p. 30; see also R. Roberts, The Classic Slum (Manchester, 1971) where he notes that during his childhood ethnic friction was commonplace, pp. 7, 9

[16] He promised to be 'a loyal brother', Joyce, *Work*, p. 258

As one historian of the city has noted the Manchester Tories 'outstripped the Liberals ... in their appeal to the working class voter and in the patriotic ritual of their rallies.'[17] Furthermore, the 'Walter Long Van' - the travelling anti-Home Rule exhibition - had been busy throughout Lancashire and had been to Manchester in September to the evident satisfaction of local Unionists.[18] Carson may well have been aware that the ground had already been prepared and his Mancunian rally was suitably impressive.

At the theatre - where programme girls had brisk trade selling penny union jacks - Lord Derby took the chair. His opening remarks indicated that Salvidge's words may well have struck home. "We are seeking English votes – not guns", said the Lancastrian peer, and the proximity of such a powerful moderate seemed to temper the Ulster leader's language. 'It appeared that Sir Edward Carson was in a conciliatory mood', noted a suspicious *Manchester Guardian*, 'as he began by announcing that he would like "to associate himself with Lord Derby's remarks."'[19] Yet the same old inflammatory rhetoric followed. "Not conspirators they (cheers) no plotting in the dark against king and constitution (cheers) no mean methods (cheers) You will not find Ulstermen shooting from behind a hedge. (Cheers and hurrahs. Again and again) ... We are your countrymen, let us bide with you."[20] And, he added, if the government uses the Army to coerce the Ulstermen then 'will the manhood of England rise and declare 'you shall not do this terrible thing.'[21]

After the meeting Carson was escorted to the Houldsworth Hall in Deansgate by 'a procession numbering some thousands' and an unexpectedly large crowd had gathered about the approaches to the central station.[22] These crowds seem to have been unanticipated by local Tories, echoing the remarks made about Mancunian apathy in the letter to John Boraston in May 1913 (see above). 'Sir Edward Carson and Co. left this morning amidst a blaze of applause', reported a local Unionist, though it seems this may have been because of the involvement of the more professional Ulster propaganda machine - or as he put it '(contact with Irishmen must be held responsible for such a bull).'[23]

Nottingham was another city whose political profile would have suggested a sympathetic response to Carsonism. As late as July 1914, an ILP councillor from the neighbouring, and more radical, town of Leicester condemned the city - 'poor old stick in the mud

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[17] Alan Kidd, *Manchester* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993),p. 172

[18] See report from 17 July 1913, in 'Minute Book of the Manchester Junior Unionist Central Committee', BLO, CPA ARE 3/16/1, and report from 5 July 1913 from the 'Minute Book of the Lancashire and Cheshire Federation of Junior Unionist Organisatons', p. 59 BLO, CPA ARE 3/16/2

[19] *Manchester Guardian*, 4 December 1913

[20] *Manchester Courier*, 4 December 1913

[21] *Times*, 4 December 1913

[22] *Manchester Courier*, 4 December 1913

[23] Letter from Henry Langley (Honorary Secretary of the Manchester Unionist Association) to the 17th Earl of Derby, 5 December 1913. LRO, 920 DER (17) 17/8. He also told Derby that 'for the Carson meeting the expenses were very heavy and we want at least £137. 10s. 0d.' (this would be around £8,000 today), see letter from Langley to Lord Derby, 13 Dec 1913. LRO, 920 DER (17) 17/8

Nottingham'[24] - for its lack of a serious local Labour movement (and the MP for Leicester, Labour's Ramsay MacDonald, would condemn the 'sweaters of Ulster' for exploiting religious differences to divide the working class at a meeting in his constituency).[25] For at Nottingham the Tories had been successful at 'mobilising working class support' not least through the success of the Primrose League throughout the larger county of Nottinghamshire.[26] It is interesting therefore that it was here that Carson was presented with a Primrose League resolution passed at meetings representing 250 Habitations and 277,352 members nationwide, which read

> That this Habitation of the Primrose League desires to express its strong condemnation of the proposals contained in the Home Rule Bill, and protests emphatically against the action of the Government in passing the said Bill into law without reference to the electors.[27]

Over three thousand people gathered in the Nottingham Albert Hall to hear the Ulster leader and although the Tory *Nottingham Guardian* thought it 'a remarkable, a memorable, a notable gathering' in comparison with other such meetings it was rather low key. Carson told the paper's reporter that he was 'profoundly impressed by the gathering, and the thoughtful, serious, and earnest tone of the vast audience';[28]and the *Evening Post* spoke of the impressiveness 'of the huge gathering.'[29] Needless to say the local Liberal press dismissed it all as 'Ulsteria in its most violent form', and the number of Liberal infiltrators in the Hall proved, for them, that the 'minority of Nottinghamshire is supporting the minority in Ireland.'[30] Yet this was not the end of Notts' interest in Ulster.

In February 1914 the *Nottingham Guardian* sent staff to Belfast to report on the UVF, and concluded that 'when it is added that the brains and stamina of Belfast are in the resistance movement no question seems necessary as to whether this is a serious business. Those who think otherwise should see for themselves.'[31] Such provincial interest pleased the *Belfast Telegraph*, and it noted with satisfaction that 'the articles appear to have created a profound impression in Nottingham and district.'[32] Maybe so, but this whistle-stop autumn tour of central and Northern England had not quite matched the effusiveness of the summer, yet the fortunes of the Ulster mission would soon take an upward turn.

The South West of England had witnessed an above average swing to the Unionists in 1910, with the Unionist *Western Morning News* and Liberal *Westminster Gazette* both

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[24] P. Wyncoll, *The Nottingham Labour Movement, 1880-1939* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985), p. 160
[25] *Times*, 27 May 1913
[26] Pugh, *Tories and the People*, p. 114; Pelling, *Social Geography*, p. 209
[27] *Nottingham Evening Post*, 6 December 1913
[28] *Nottingham Guardian*, 6 December 1913
[29] *Nottingham Evening Post*, 6 December 1913
[30] *Nottingham Daily Express*, 6 December 1913
[31] *Nottingham Guardian*, 6 February 1914
[32] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 7 February 1914

attributing Unionist gains in Devon and Cornwall to Home Rule.[33] But it had been ever thus. Two of the region's largest cities, Plymouth and Portsmouth, were naval and dockyard towns sympathetic to strident British imperialism. What is more the real concerns that Irish Home Rule would threaten coastal security and lead to persecution of Protestants had continued to give Home Rule an above average purchase in the Peninsula, where folk memories of the Spanish Armada were strong.[34] It has also been argued that this enthusiasm for the Union sprang from the dominance of Wesleyans in Devon and Cornwall who, as it has been pointed out, feared 'Rome Rule', and had swung against the Liberals between 1885 and 1892.[35] And in a speech at Bodmin in 1889 Joseph Chamberlain had made great play of the threat of Catholic domination in Ireland inherent in Home Rule.[36]

There are grounds to suggest that the Irish question continued to tempt those who had previously remained Liberal to turn against the government right up until the Great War. In the 1910 elections Unionists had constantly reminded voters in the South West of 'the threat of home rule (or 'Rome rule')' should the lords' veto be removed.[37] The many Nonconformist constituents of the Cornish MP Thomas Agar-Robartes may well have induced him to suggest Ulster's exclusion from a Home Rule parliament,[38] and one study has shown how perceived 'pandering' to Catholic demands for Home Rule had induced prestigious Wesleyans in the peninsula to become Liberal Unionist.[39]

Next door in Devon there is some indication that Catholicism was not met with universal respect. Earlier that year the *Times* had reported that the chair of the East Stonehouse Board of Guardians had said that the *Ne Temere* decree was 'very insidious' and 'it behoved all patriotic Englishmen to prevent such a condition of affairs from being allowed to continue.'[40] Patriotic Englishmen in the West Country were exactly the constituency that the agents of the Irish Unionist Alliance wished to target. 'I am particularly anxious to work the Truro Division of Cornwall when we have finished in N W Devon and E Dorset', wrote an IUA agent working in Bristol. 'These two constituencies in which we are working are extremely important, and there is a considerable change in the feelings of the radicals' [original emphasis]. Furthermore, it was at this time that the Unionist MP for Honiton in Devon was told by his Party bosses to concentrate his speeches upon Home Rule, and in November two proselytisers from the UWUC were very busy in mid Devon.[41]

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[33] Blewett, *Peers, Parties, and People*, p. 411
[34] Pelling, *Social Geography*, pp. 163-64
[35] Bebbington, *Nonconformist Conscience*, p. 92
[36] *Times*, 18 October 1889. An MP for Bodmin had sponsored the Religious Houses Bill of 1851 which proposed the inspection of convents, see *Hansard*, 116 [1851]: 949, 959
[37] Michael Dawson, 'Liberalism in Devon and Cornwall, 1910-1931: "the old-time religion"'. *Historical Journal*, 38 (1995), 428
[38] Jackson, *Home Rule*, p. 142
[39] D.W. Bebbington, 'Nonconformity and electoral Sociology, 1867-1918', *Historical Journal* (1984); Bebbington, *Nonconformist Conscience*, p. 93. Interesting too that an MP for Bodmin, H. E. Lacy, had sponsored the 'Religious Houses Bill' in 1851 condemning convents, see Wallis, 'Anti-Catholicism', p. 10
[40] *Times*, 28 February 1913
[41] Letter from Lord Edward Talbot, and Arthur Steel Maitland to Major A.C. Morrison-Bell, 30 October 1913. PRONI, D/1507/A/4/11; Urquhart, *Minutes*, p. 92

On the 7 December 1913 Carson left London for Plymouth. On route he was welcomed at Exeter, where a year earlier the local MP, Mr Duke, had spoken of 'Ulster's right to resist, and that the 'killing of men who so resist is not an act of oppression – it is an act of murder.'[42] There, amid large crowds who had congregated at the station, he was met by a deputation of the Exeter Working Men's Conservative Union. Cheers were given as he left the city, and cheers were received as his train steamed in to Plymouth station. There he was greeted by another large crowd (including the local MP, Waldorf Astor) and after subjecting themselves to the 'flashlight photographers' he was driven in procession to the Duke of Cornwall Hotel.[43]

Devon had a long Loyalist pedigree: William of Orange had landed at Torbay and passed through Exeter on his way to London and Loyal Toasting Clubs had flourished in the county throughout the eighteenth century. Plymouth's dock workers and naval traditions made it a largely Tory town (bolstered by a large Primrose League membership) and the Unionists won both Plymouth seats in December 1910 when the re-emergence of Home Rule hurt the Liberals badly.[44] There was a strategic objection in the West Country to an independent Ireland, but it is significant too that migrant workers and military personnel had brought about an Irish presence in Plymouth - and it is important to note that the notorious Protestant street preacher, William Murphy, sparked a riot in the town in 1871, and was nearly killed by furious Catholic Irishmen. [45] But at the same time an Orange foothold was also being established in the town, and in January 1914 the Belfast press reported that the 'Golden Camp Lodge of Protestant Crusaders' of Plymouth sent a message to the Orangemen of Newtownards. '[We] trust that God's blessing and guidance may attend your efforts to maintain and uphold the Protestant Religion', this was signed by G. Foster (a Newtownards man) and it was reported that 'many of the Plymouth lodgemen are also Ulster Scots.'[46]

At the meeting the following evening Carson received a seriously impressive reception. 'Sir Edward Carson ... addressed one of the largest and most enthusiastic mass meetings he has yet attended', wrote the Unionist *Irish Times*, 'The Drill Hall, a commodious building, accommodating between 9 and 10 thousand people, was crowded to its utmost capacity.' The audience had been brought by special excursion trains from all parts of Devonshire, and they were crammed into the hall which had been suitably decorated with red, white, and blue streamers. The mottoes displayed on the walls captured well the sentiment behind the meeting: 'We will not have Home Rule', 'Ulster is right', 'the West will support Ulster', 'The Empire and Ulster, one and indivisible, for ever', 'Help Ulster keep the Union Jack', 'Hold fast and fight hard', and 'Western Unionists will brook no

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[42] Donald Read, *Documents from Edwardian England, 1901-1915* (London: Harrap 1973), p. 310
[43] *Western Evening Herald*, 8 December 1913
[44] Pugh, *Tories and the People*, p. 99; Pelling, *Social Geography*, p. 168
[45] Crispin Gill, *Plymouth: A New History, 1603 to the Present Day* (North Pomfret, VT: David & Charles, 1979), pp. 143, 149, 161; Walter L. Arnstein, 'The Murphy Riots: A Victorian Dilemma', *Victorian Studies*, 19:2 (1975), p. 54
[46] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 25 February 1914

disruption.' A banner behind the platform displayed the words 'Sons of the Empire we were born - Sons of the Empire we will die.'[47]

The meeting opened with the national anthem at which point the whole audience stood, and they remained standing for Ulster's unofficial anthem, 'O God our help in ages past'. Upon introducing Carson the chairman claimed that there had been over 40,000 applications for tickets, and judging by the enthusiastic reception he received this does not seem far fetched - even the Liberal *Western Evening Herald* conceded that the crowd in the hall was massive 'and that the hall literally tremble[ed] as the demonstrators sprang to their feet and roared their welcome'[48]

With polychromatic verve Carson explained to the audience that 'the men who want to put us down by force are the men who wanted to thwart all our operations in the Boer War, who hindered the army, who talked about Barbarism and hecatombs of slaughtered babes (Shame).' He concluded with the exhortation that 'we are proud of our position in the empire. We have been proud to go with you in the march of progress and civilisation. We will do our best to maintain our position, and we are here tonight to ask you in all solemnity, will you help us? (Loud and prolonged cheers).'[49]

The local *Western Morning News* was, according to its editor, 'the leading Unionist paper in the west of England'[50] – and this was undoubtedly reflected in its reportage which was almost giddy in its pro-Ulster enthusiasm. 'Industrial Glasgow, Historic Edinburgh, Agricultural Norfolk ... Plymouth's outburst equalled if not exceeded them all' it seemed satisfied to conclude. What is more, unlike their Liberal competitor, they reported in some depth the imposing processions that followed the meeting. Despite the inclement weather, street-side crowds gathered twelve deep in places, and it was notable too that a 'stalwart body of Orangemen wearing their regalia' walked in front and between the decorated carriages. A scene vividly described in the *Morning News*:

> This brilliant and picturesque body of light and colour found a way amid thousands of cheering people, undeterred by the persistent rain. Along George Street the scene was very impressive as the dozens of flaring torches displayed, as it were, a sea of heads and faces entirely filling the thoroughfare. The procession proceeded without a sign of opposition ... at the hotel the more notable of the visitors were carried shoulder high from their carriages in to the hotel between a bodyguard of Orangemen.

(We also find reported in the same paper one of the few occasions when those responsible for the organisation of such an event are acknowledged: in this case a twelve

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[47] *Irish Times*, 9 December 1913
[48] *Western Evening Herald*, 9 December 1913
[49] *Irish Times*, 9 December 1913
[50] It also held 'strongly imperial views' see letter from G. Edmond Spender to Andrew Bonar Law, 30 December 1912. HLRO, BL/28/1/106. Unionists in Devon enjoyed a great deal of press support, certainly in comparison with neighbouring Cornwall, see Michael Dawson, 'Party politics and the provincial press in early twentieth century England: the case of the south west', *20th Century British History*, 9 (1998), p. 214

man 'demonstration committee' formed from Party workers and led with 'skill' by a Mr Collings.)[51]

The Ulster Unionists were pleased with their visit to Plymouth, with one anonymous Northern Irish MP expressing his amazement that 'not a discordant note from among all those people. And such a nasty day too.'[52] (This would not have surprised one contemporary observer of West Country politics who wrote in 1902 that the educational value of Campaigns was 'very slight', they were designed to 'raise enthusiasm', and those that attended were generally partisans.)[53] Nevertheless the Ulster Party would have been doubly pleased to see such a supportive reception replicated across the county border in Cornwall. From the nineteenth century onwards the county had become a Liberal stronghold, yet in the general election of 1886 'Chamberlain's Duchy' became an area of Liberal-*Unionist* strength.[54] Yet as one historian of Cornwall has put it, 'the popularity of Unionism could not disguise the weakness of Conservatism proper', and he cites the problems that the Primrose League had in establishing themselves in the county.[55] However, the final destination for the Ulster Party was the cathedral city of Truro, whose religious profile was somewhat exceptional in the county. Indeed, since the revival of its see in 1876, Truro had become a location 'of Anglican strength', as well as a hub of Primrose League-ism (with some 900 members at the turn of the century).[56] But it is also significant that Gladstone had visited Truro in 1889 in an attempt to reassure local Protestants that there was no risk that the 'reign of Queen Mary' would be recreated in Ireland.[57]

As ever, hosting Carson was a big deal, and took some planning. The local Unionists convened a planning meeting at the Truro Unionist Lecture Hall to thrash out logistics, and they concluded that the budget for the event would be a substantial £450, and that seats could be reserved at 7/6, or 5 shillings. Sir Edward would be given an hour to speak (how many modern politicians could manage that?), and they decided that ladies would not be allowed on platform. Importantly, they also decided to ascertain the price of 5,000 reprints of press reports of demonstration for subsequent circulation in Helston division of southern Cornwall.[58]

Carson travelled on the 'Riviera Express' and arrived in the city at 4.10pm. There he was met by 'a huge crowd', whereupon a procession of 'gaily decorated' cars and carriages, led by the Town Band, was formed and 'Sir Edward Carson and the other Ulster Unionist

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[51] *Western Morning News*, 9 December 1913
[52] *Western Morning News*, 9 December 1913
[53] M. Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the organization of political parties* (2 vols., London, 1902), I, 382-409, esp. 391 and 409
[54] Ian Soulsby, *A History of Cornwall* (Chichester: 1986), p. 108
[55] Phillip Payton, 'Labour Failure and Liberal Tenacity: Radical Politics and Cornish Political Culture, 1880-1939', *Cornish Studies*, 2 (1994), p. 87
[56] Pugh, *Tories and the People*, p. 97;
[57] *Times*, 13 June 1889
[58] Letter from C. G. Briggs, Hon. Sec. Truro Unionists to members containing 'Demonstration agenda', 3 November 1913; also Minutes of meeting, 8 November 1913, 'Cornwall Provincial Division of the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations Minute Book', BLO, CPA ARE 11/7/1

members drove through the streets of the historic cathedral city, to the accompaniment of rousing cheers',[59] which culminated in a mass gathering outside his billet at the Red Lion Hotel. As at Inverness and elsewhere the remoteness of Truro made Carson's arrival a massive local event - special trains had been chartered, as well as motorbuses from 'the Lizard and St Keverne' - and, in an unconscious echo of the June reports that appeared in the Scottish press, *The Royal Cornwall Gazette* claimed breathlessly that 'no meeting of recent years has aroused such enthusiasm and profound fervour ... the audience was the largest ever congregated at a political gathering in Cornwall.'[60]

Three thousand people had been squeezed into the city's Market Hall which had been appropriately festooned with flags for the occasion, and when the Ulster leader arrived in the Hall 'O God' was sung 'with great reverence.' Carson introduced himself and his colleagues as "Missionaries of the Union" and gave a rehash of speeches he had given many times before: Ulster was "a great Protestant and loyal community"; Belfast 'has the lowest rate of Pauperism of any Irish city'; how could they trust the Southern Irish when Cardinal Logue had said that '"no matter what the Nonconformists of England may have inserted into the constitution of the University to keep it from being made Catholic, we will make Catholic in spite of them. Please God we will turn it into a Catholic University" (cries of "shame").' He concluded with the words of John Hampden '"It is not against the King that we fight, but for the King and Kingdom's right" (cheers).'[61] It is significant that the chairman of the meeting "rejoiced to say that one Cornishman, Mr. Agar Robartes, had stood up for the union of England."[62] This further repeated the politically ecumenical appeal - made so often in Scotland - that the Unionists hoped would strike a chord with the public.

The Truro meeting had obviously been a massive enterprise: as the names of the procession marshals and the seventeen men who superintended the 300 stewards on duty in the Hall were printed in the local paper, as well as members of the welcome committee – not to mention the staff of John Julian & Co, who decorated the hall, the Furnishing Department of N. Gill and Sons who provided all the extra chairs, and floor builders, platform erectors, and even Red Cross Volunteer ambulance-men.[63] Yet at the same time smaller scale speaking activity was kept up across the country. 'Scunthorpe's Market hall was crowded' to hear James Craig[64] – and in rural Northumberland Lord Percy spoke on 'Ulster's Dread' and, according to the press, 'the school room at Longframlington was crowded'[65] and he repeated the same speech a week later in the even tinier Northumbrian village of Stamfordham.[66]

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[59] *Irish Times*, 10 December 1913
[60] *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 11 December 1913
[61] *Western Morning News*, 10 December 1913
[62] *West Briton and Cornwall Advertiser*, 11 December 1913
[63] *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 11 December 1913
[64] *Hull Daily Mail*, 6 December 1913
[65] *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 1 December 1913
[66] *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 8 December 1913

At Fenstanton in true blue Huntingdonshire,[67] the local MP, Oliver Locker Lampson, explained to his constituents the extreme steps that he would take to support Ulster. 'Every man was ready to take', he reminded his audience, but, he appealed, 'let the Tories of North Hunts also be ready to give. (Loud cheers).'[68] This appeal was evidently successful as he was soon able to inform the *Belfast Telegraph* that the Fens were mobilising.

> In sixty parishes in my constituency I have arranged with a Protestant family to take in and care for – for a year and a half if need be – a child from some protestant family in Ulster, if civil war should break out there ... I have arranged immediately to raise a nucleus of 100 men, and am selling my motor car to equip them with rifles; and it is my earnest hope that every constituency in England will follow our example. Everyone who has signified his intention to join our troop is prepared to go to the utmost limits.[69]

The work of the Irish Unionist Alliance in rallying British support cannot be discounted. 'The past year has proved ... exceptionally busy', they noted in their annual report. The IUA had held 3,047 meetings; and canvassed 580,872 doubtful voters in 200 selected constituencies across Britain, and, they believed that the 'results of by-elections, in which Liberal majorities have been changed to unionist majorities, or substantially reduced, testify to the thoroughness, and efficiency of the work of the Irish Unionists in British constituencies.'[70] They also distributed some 1,840,000 booklets pamphlets, and leaflets, with evocative titles such as 'Home Rule in Crete, and its sequel – An Object lesson for Englishmen', 'The Bishop and the Regimental Colours', and 'Shooting outrages in Ireland.'[71] There was a slightly confusing overlap between the IUA and the Unionist Association of Ireland (the UAI), with the Ulster Unionist Council claiming that in the many Unionist by-election victories in Britain 'the successful result was largely due to our speakers and canvassers.'[72]

By December 1913 all Unionist organisations seemed to perceive the opportunity that the problems of Ireland presented and were acting accordingly. Writing to Lord Derby, the principal Tory agent in the North West informed him of their forthcoming poster campaign. 'The main posters will deal first with Home Rule, second with Welsh Dis. [sic], and the third with Land or insurance', he wrote; and this was to be backed up with a concerted programme of leafleting where 'the Ladies' associations or the Primrose League could be asked to assist.'[73] A united front on Ulster (rather than their divided ranks at the height of the Tariff Reform controversy) as well as publicity-grabbing

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[67] Pelling, *Social Geography*, p. 96
[68] *Huntingdonshire Post*, 5 December 1913
[69] Matters were complicated in his case because the Liberal Secretary of State for Ireland, Augustine Birrell, was his brother-in-law, see the *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 5 December 1913.
[70] *Irish Unionist Alliance: Twenty-seventh Annual Report, 1912-13* (Dublin, 1913), pp. 6-7 PRONI, D/989/A/7/4
[71] Ibid., p. 16
[72] *The Ulster Unionist Council and Ulster Union of Constitutional Associations Year Book* [...] *1913* (Belfast 1913), p. 63. PRONI, D/972/17 (Smythe Papers)
[73] Letter from John Boraston to the 17th Earl of Derby, 18 December 1913. HLRO, *920 DER (17) 17/8.*

demonstrations, may well explain the change in public opinion. Indeed, one Unionist MP confided to his diary that Bonar Law was convinced that "'Ulster' alone would turn out the government.'[74]

One Ulster Unionist MP told a journalist in Plymouth that 'our tours have roused the people of England', of course he was bound to say this, but his conclusion is more measured 'a year ago it was like fighting a feather bed; today we have sympathy and understanding with us.'[75] Unionists like Walter Long believed this too - writing that, in England, 'feeling for Ulster and the Union is undoubtedly growing and hardening here'[76] – but then so did Irish Nationalists. The veteran campaigner Tim Healy wrote despondently to his brother on Christmas Day that he feared 'Carson's bluff will win, and then the Tories will be in office before twelve months.'[77]

II

Nineteen-fourteen began with continued pessimism over the position of Ireland. The Archbishop of Canterbury authorised the use of the 'Solemn Service of Intercession for the Preservation of Peace in Ireland', and in a diocesan letter, the Bishop of Durham asked his vicars 'to move the people to pray for peace in Ireland.'[78] The author of the *Ulster Crisis* wrote that 'the extent to which the Ulster question obsessed British politics in 1914 is widely recognized', but, as he rightly points out, this obsession was not confined to a handful of politicians at Westminster, Dublin, and Belfast, as there were plenty of committed 'supporters of Ulster in Britain.'[79] Indeed, at a speech in Belfast, Walter Long 'assured Ulster of the support of the Unionist Party in England, and spoke of the strengthening current of public opinion hostile to the Nationalists.'[80] He may have been correct. At Bristol, Bonar Law reminded the country that they had pledged to support Ulster, and

> We intend with the help of the Almighty to keep the pledge, and the keeping of it involves something more than making speeches. It involves this – that we are bound in honour to Ulster to use every means – any means which seem to us effective – to prevent the coercion of Ulster.[81]

By the end of the month the British League had enrolled 10,000 men, and by the end of February the league announced in the *Morning Post* that they 'have enrolled and are drilling 15,000 volunteers who have pledged themselves to act "anywhere and in any

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[74] Diary entry, 7 December 1913. John Ramsden, ed., *Real old Tory Politics: The political Diaries of Sir Robert Sanders, Lord Bayford, 1910-1935* (London: The Historian's Press, 1984), p. 67
[75] *Western Morning News*, 9 December 1913
[76] Letter from Walter Long to James Craig, 31 December 1913. PRONI, T/3775/4/2
[77] Colvin, *Carson*, p. 261
[78] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 1 January 1914
[79] Stewart, *Ulster Crisis*, p. 130
[80] *Times*, 20 January 1914
[81] *Bristol Times*, 16 January 1914

manner to assist Ulster.'"[82] Viscount Milner, the ex Governor of South Africa, was a key player in this movement. He was convinced that 'there are a great many people who still fail to realise, what the strength of our feeling is on this subject',[83] and he would soon write to Carson declining his offer to come and speak in Belfast as the League had 'a little bit of a move on', and he therefore did not want to be away from London.[84]

Milner was preoccupied with the growth of the British Covenanter movement, which took as its model the Ulster version of 1912. Such a Covenant was deemed necessary because it was felt that although the BLSUU had over 400 agents spread over the country and had enlisted thousands of men 'who are prepared to fight in Ulster if required' this gesture was limited because only a small proportion of those enrolled persons could actually fight in Ulster with a rifle.[85] Therefore it was felt that a more representative movement was necessary, which could attract greater numbers and more 'leading names' could be enticed to sign so that it become 'decisive'.[86] Therefore a new timetable was agreed with 'February and March ... required for collecting the signatures ... demonstrations would then follow in April and May and up to the final crisis.'[87] And as we shall see this schedule was followed exactly.

Milner's excitement at the progress of his brainchild is palpable, telling the aging reactionary Field Marshal Earl Roberts that 'The Covenant is going magnificently all over the country', F. S. Oliver was informed that 'names are rolling in by thousands', and to Lord Selborne he announced that 'the movement ... is going to be of enormous proportions.'[88] Bonar Law seemed pleased at this, and, although withholding his official *imprimatur*, he told Lord Lansdowne that he was 'inclined to think that if a movement of this kind could be started by the right people and on the right scale it would be decisive.'[89] Having an energetic former proconsul in the person of Lord Milner as an organiser certainly helped.

In a memorandum, Milner began to plan the mobilisation of *armed resistance* in England so that 'in the last resort [the BLSUU could] furnish a really effective resistance to the action of the Government' by instigating 'an organised and immediately successful *national uprising* [emphasis added].'[90]This League has undoubtedly been underestimated, and the waves they made between the end of 1913 and early 1914 began to erode some people's expectation of a peaceful settlement of the Irish question. Indeed, in the middle of January Leo Amery was surprised to discover during a check-up that his London dentist was a supporter of the British League and was apparently 'thirsting to go and fight

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[82] *Morning Post*, 27 Feb 1914
[83] Letter from Viscount Milner to the Earl of Selborne, 18 January 1914, BLO, MSS. Eng. Hist. c. 689 (17)
[84] Stewart, *Ulster Crisis*, p. 133; Colvin, *Carson*, p. 242
[85] 'Memorandum', BLO, Add Mss Eng Hist C.689 (181)
[86] Letter from Viscount Milner to the 2nd Earl of Selborne, 6 March 1914 BLO, MS Selborne 12 (242-5)
[87] 'Memorandum', BLO, Add Mss Eng Hist C.689 (181)
[88] Letter from Viscount Milner to Earl Roberts, 6 March 1914, BLO, MS Milner Dep 16; letter from Milner to F. S. Oliver, 4 March 1914 BLO, MS Milner Dep 13 (77); and the letter from Milner to the 2nd Earl of Selborne, 6 March 1914. BLO, MS Selborne 12 (242)
[89] Letter from Andrew Bonar Law to the Marquis of Lansdowne, 17 January 1914. HLRO, BLP 34/1/14
[90] 'Memorandum', BLO, MS Milner Dep c. 689, 178-85

in Ulster.' Convinced that civil war in Ireland was imminent he wrote to Neville Chamberlain later that month 'certain that [war] will spread over here.'[91]

The chilling prediction that Britain was on the brink of civil war has been lightly passed over in most histories of the period but this was a forecast made by several others in the spring of 1914. 'Certain it is that never in our lives have we been standing on such a perilous brink', wrote a young Stanley Baldwin to his mother.[92] Surveying the situation in Ulster Lord Selborne concluded baldly to a political opponent, the Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey, that 'our country is in danger, I believe in awful danger'.[93] The country was in danger because in all likelihood, with '10,000 [British volunteers] who are prepared to fight in Ulster if required' hostilities would have spread to Britain.[94] 'Civil war won't begin <u>& end</u> in Ulster [sic]', wrote Lord Hindlip to Milner, before concluding despairingly 'if we are to have civil war what are we going to do?'[95] This was speculation supported in an internal BLSUU document that noted

> civil war once begun cannot be confined to Ulster alone. And given the temper of the two parties, and the attitude of a large section of labour, it is impossible to say where civil war once begun would stop.[96]

Yet despite these grave developments there were still concerns within the Unionist Party that their anti-Home Rule message was not getting through to absolutely everybody. Carson, the eternal pessimist, wrote pathetically to Lady Londonderry that 'the atmosphere in Ulster and England is so different that one hardly knows what to think.'[97] As befits a man of his class and political outlook, Carson here was being unrealistic. For even if Britain was stirring in Ulster's favour, the country at large was not as oppressively parochial as Ulster: as Dangerfield pointed out, Home Rule was competing with Syndicalism and Suffragism for national attention. Moreover, the government still had some cards to play. Lloyd George's land campaign was popular in rural parts of the country – where the Irish question had barely registered. 'It is very difficult to bring home to the people here in the Midlands the imminence of civil war', noted the Duke of Bedford,[98] and Henry Chaplin wrote from his constituency to Law that an anti-Home Rule meeting there had been 'up hill work ... it was almost impossible to get any enthusiastic response.'[99] Furthermore, it seems that there were some Unionists in the provinces who were so tired of the Irish question that they were willing to accept Home Rule for want of any better suggestions. 'The Home Rule Bill is popular with <u>nobody</u>,

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[91] John Barnes and David Nicholson, eds, *The Leo Amery Diaries, Volume I: 1896-1929* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), pp. 97-98

[92] Letter from Stanley Baldwin to Louisa Baldwin, 31 March 1914, in Phillip Williamson and Edward Baldwin, eds, *Baldwin Papers: A Conservative Statesman, 1908-1947* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), p. 24

[93] Letter from the 2nd Earl of Selborne to Sir Edward Grey, 3 April 1914, BLO MS Selborne 77 (97)

[94] 'Memorandum', BLO, MS Milner Dep, Add Mss Eng. Hist. C.689 (180)

[95] Letter from Baron Hindlip to Viscount Milner, 22 March 1914, BLO, MS Milner Dep 41

[96] 'Memorandum', BLO, MS Milner Dep, Add Mss Eng. Hist. C.689 (181)

[97] Letter from Sir Edward Carson to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 3 February 1914. PRONI, D/2846/1/1/115

[98] Letter from the Duke of Bedford to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 18 January 1914. PRONI, D/2846/1/11/1

[99] Letter from Henry Chaplin to Andrew Bonar Law, 30 January 1914. HLRO, BL/31/2/72

except extreme Liberals', so confided a Party member in Bristol to Bonar Law, 'but there is a general feeling that "something must be done" as regards to Ireland and until an alternative policy is put forward, men are disposed to accept the Home Rule Bill, if it were not for the position of Ulster [original emphasis].'[100]

The sense of public opinion that emerges in this period is a confusing one. On the one hand press reports from a by-election in South Buckinghamshire described how 'tired' the locals were of Home Rule and how they 'desired a settlement of the Irish question.'[101] Yet on the other, Lady Londonderry was informed that a 'short statement about the Macan [sic] case[102] and the 'Ne Temere' decree would be very useful to circulate among the dissenters and radicals in the English constituencies', she also pointed out that there is 'an election coming up in South Bucks and I am sure it would be useful there'.[103] Indeed, the *Times* would note in February that Home Rule is playing a considerable part in the South Bucks by-election', and the ubiquitous UWUC had sent a platoon of missionaries to that corner of the Home Counties.[104]

In the Tory press, supposed public apathy with regard to Ireland was spoken of as being the fault of a decadent and immature society. '[Britain] occupies itself with its ordinary affairs and interests', concluded the *Evening Standard*, 'it buys and sells and does its work; it continues occasionally to read a book; it swarms into picture palaces and music halls and theatres, especially theatres which provided their judicious patrons with bedroom scenes.' In short, the country was 'barely conscious of the appalling peril in which we stand, a peril greater than we have had to encounter for many centuries, and one that may involve us within a few months or even weeks in ruinous disaster.'[105]

Nevertheless, there were some that still believed that the prospect of changing public opinion was not a lost cause. For although James Freeman of Darlington spoke of the 'failure to rouse England to a sense of realities of the situation in Ulster', his simple recommendation was that 'the Ulster leaders and the leaders of the Conservative Party must keep the campaign in the constituencies going.'[106] In retrospect this was sound, if cynical, advice. In attempting to ascertain public opinion on the Irish question, it quickly becomes clear how very fickle were the British public. Although a personal appearance from Carson would almost always draw a favourable response, the public tended to lose interest very quickly and required constant stimulation. Therefore Carson's tours recommenced in January, with the peripatetic Irishman heading first to Chester.[107]

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[100] Letter from George Davies to Andrew Bonar Law, 9 March 1914. HLRO, BL/31/4/18
[101] Tanner, *Labour Party*, p. 306 fn. 60
[102] The Catholic Church in Ireland stated that a marriage between a Catholic man and a Protestant woman in Belfast was invalid and therefore ordered that their offspring be brought up by the father.
[103] Anonymous letter [though obviously a friend] to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 12 January 1914. PRONI, D/2846/1/11/52
[104] *Times*, 5 February 1914; Urquhart, *Minutes*, p. 96
[105] *Evening Standard*, 18 March 1914
[106] Letter from James Freeman to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 16 February 1914. PRONI, D/2846/1/10/2
[107] Letter from Sir Edward Carson to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 22 January 1914. PRONI, D/2846/1/1/114

When Carson's proposed visit to the city had been publicised, it was reported that there had been 'an exceptionally high demand for tickets', and 5,000 had been sent out by post in the week before he arrived.[108] By 1906 both Chester and Cheshire had become firmly Unionist,[109] and many in the area would have recollected the Fenian Raid on Chester Gaol in 1867 which 'may have fomented anti-Irish feeling in the city', and certainly helped turn the Duke of Westminster against Home Rule.[110] It must be said, however, that the prospect of Carson coming to the county was not universally welcomed. There had even been concern expressed at a local *Unionist* meeting that Carson was '"working" the Ulster upheaval,' and he certainly 'worked' Chester.[111] Over 8,000 people had filled the American Skating Rink, and even the Liberal leaning *Chester Chronicle* conceded that 'it was the biggest political meeting ever held in the city.'[112] A long cue of arrivals filled the surrounding streets, yet 'excellent order was maintained' in no small part thanks to the 250 strong company of stewards who had been recruited from the ranks of the local Conservative Workingmen's Club.[113]

The hall had been appropriately decorated in the imperial colours and lit with many 'coloured electric lights.' Chester was 'eager to see the man who is the Lion in the path of the government' and although it was 'mainly [a] male audience', for the benefit of the fairer sex 'a special gallery placed at their disposal was well filled.'[114] Carson was welcomed with a round of 'For he's a jolly god fellow' before proceeding to speak for an hour on Ulster's predicament and resolve to go on. 'With your assistance ... we will march no matter what they do, as still the body politic of a great United Kingdom', he declared to '(Loud and prolonged cheering)', before asking whether there was 'nothing at all in being born a Britisher? Would you give it up? To which the audience shouted back 'No.'[115] Then a 'great wave of sympathy found expression in the resolution which was carried without a dissentient voice.'[116]

According to the *Chronicle*, the lines of cars outside the rink 'showed that the surrounding districts were well represented by rank and wealth' (and indeed the Duchess of Westminster and the Bishop of St Asaph were in attendance).[117] These cars were part of the motorcade that was to be the culmination to the evening's meeting, and the *Liverpool Courier* reported that 'Edward Carson drove through the city in a motor car, headed by a torchlight procession, and the greatest enthusiasm prevailed.'[118] However the detailed reports in the local press are more revealing. 'Along the route from the

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[108] *Chester Courant*, 21 January 1914
[109] Pelling, *Social Geography*, pp. 280, 28
[110] C. P. Lewis, and A. T. Thacker, eds, *A History of the County of Chester: Volume 5 (i) The City of Chester: General History and Topography* (Victoria County History, 2003), p. 171
[111] *Chester Chronicle*, 17 January 1914
[112] *Chester Chronicle*, 24 January 1914
[113] *Cheshire Observer*, 24 January 1914
[114] *Chester Courant*, 28 January 1914
[115] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 24 January 1914
[116] *Chester Courant*, 28 January 1914
[117] *Chester Chronicle*, 24 January 1914. 'It may be hoped [that the Bishop] will not take his cue from Ulster and drill militant Churchmen to use arms against their fellow-Welshmen.'
[118] *Liverpool Courier*, 24 January 1914

Grosvenor Hotel to The Cross streamed the thousands of people raising lusty shouts for the gallant Irish leaders', noted an impressed *Courant*, 'outside the hotel were scenes reminiscent of a general election.'[119]

Most interestingly of all is the fact that the Unionists still favoured the showmanship of the eighteenth century hustings. As the horses had been taken out of Carson's *carriage* - not motorcar, as the *Courier* claimed - then the vehicle 'was drawn by a cheering band of Junior Unionists carrying lighted torches.' After arriving back at their Hotel the crowd demanded speeches, and eventually Carson appeared at the hotel balcony and said "I will go back to Ulster and tell them that you are with us to a man (a voice: "and so say all of us"), and 'with a wave of his blackthorn he disappeared from view.'[120]

Carson proceeded thence to Lincoln, which had been the location of one of the earliest expressions of the Unionist Party's extreme support for Ulster when, in 1912, F. E. Smith had said that 'Ulster would not stand alone.'[121] Lincolnshire county politics in the nineteenth century had been 'farmer's politics' where the most important issues were local: protection, malt taxes and so on.[122] But the city of Lincoln was different: it had a large heavy engineering sector; nonconformity was strong despite it being a cathedral city; and it was politically marginal – with a split in the local Unionist Party allowing the Liberals to hold the seat in 1910.[123]

Carson's arrival stirred no little interest, and there was certainly a large audience inside Lincoln's Corn Exchange. But there was more obvious opposition in the East Midlands than there had been in Chester. The local *Lincolnshire Echo* was effusive in its description of the local significance of the meeting. 'In the whole of Lincoln's political history there has probably been nothing more strikingly enthusiastic in the way of great mass meetings'. Indeed, the *Echo* claimed that 'every available inch of space had been utilised.'[124] Upon entering the stage Carson had a tremendous ovation, and it was reported that he stood patiently at the rail for a good few minutes while the cheers died down.[125] He gave the usual speech – no wonder he dreaded these speaking tours – but he ended his peroration with a flourish, and a quote from John Milton: '"I argue not against Heaven's hand or will, nor bate a jot of heart or hope; but still bear up and steer straight onward." (Loud and prolonged cheers.)' With the resolution passed and 'Rule, Britannia' sung, Carson motored to the Lincoln Constitutional Club, from the balcony of which speeches were being given by some Ulster Unionist MPs. When an attempt was made to introduce Carson 'the rowdy section of the crowd' below prevented him from being

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[119] *Chester Courant*, 28 January 1914
[120] *Cheshire Observer*, 24 January 1914
[121] *Times*, 12 October 1912
[122] R. J. Olney, *Lincolnshire Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 243; The county was also used to hosting seasonal labourers from Ireland, see Sarah Barber, 'Irish migrant agricultural labourers in nineteenth century Lincolnshire', *Saothar*, 8 (1982)
[123] Pelling, *Social Geography*, p. 213
[124] *Lincolnshire Echo*, 27 January 1914
[125] *Eastern Daily News*, 27 January 1914

heard and, as at Norwich, the Unionist entourage defiantly bared their heads and sang the National Anthem.[126]

In the absence of a general election in 1914 it is of course very difficult to quantify the effect that Carson's tours had upon public opinion. Impressions are necessarily sporadic, sketchy, and conjectural. To be sure, Liberal politicians were beginning to make conciliatory noises in public - indeed, one the same day that Carson was in Lincoln, Herbert Samuel made a long winded speech at Morley in Yorkshire, pronouncing that 'if it be possible by some compromise to allay the anxieties of Ulster, and to meet her wishes it would be preferable to arrive at an amicable settlement, however justifiable it might be to enforce the Bill in its present form'[127] – but what of the British people? Odd snippets of evidence do suggest an intermittent interest in the Irish question.

When a 'City Meeting' to support Ulster was scheduled at which Carson would speak in the Cannon Street Hotel, over 600 tickets applications were quickly received.[128] At a concert in the Queen's Hall 'a speech about Ulster [was given] in the shape of a new Irish rhapsody' by Sir Charles Stanford.[129] Meetings of London plutocrats, and genteel society to support the Unionist Party were to be expected, but there were other more surprising manifestations of a similar outlook. 'We have all been so excited about Ulster', wrote Lady Florence Duncombe from Derbyshire about the UVF's recent appeal for medical supplies, 'I have collected over £5 in the village amongst the <u>women</u> ... is there any particular place, or lady to whom we should send the things: I have looked in the papers for orders or directions in vain; I am sorry to trouble you but we are all mad keen here (original emphasis).'[130] What is more, the Nonconformist Unionist Association met again at the end of February, with Bonar Law, Carson, and Chamberlain all in attendance.[131] Dissenters were thus being courted, but so too were other religious groupings: at the Bethnal Green by-election it was discovered that the Unionist candidate would receive the support of the local Jewish community.[132] Indeed, the *Times* reported 'many of [the Jews in Bethnal] are also seriously afraid of the effects of the Roman Catholic supremacy which they believe would be established in Ireland by the passing of the Home Rule Bill.'[133]

Evidence of a change in mood also came from a Liberal stronghold of Leith, the port suburb of Edinburgh. There it was reported that the Labour candidate in particular was

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[126] *Lincolnshire Echo*, 27 January 1914
[127] *Times*, 27 January 1914
[128] *Times*, 31 January 1914. For a detailed report of which see, *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 18 February 1914
[129] Letter from Charles Stanford to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 7 February 1914. PRONI, D/2846/1/11/47, for a review of the concert see the *Times*, 20 February 1914.
[130] Letter from Lady Florence Duncombe to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 11 February 1914. PRONI, D/2846/1/11/14. Another Stanford concert was proposed to raise money for the same end, see letter from H. Plunket Greene to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 8 March 1914. PRONI, D/2846/1/7/26.
[131] *Times*, 24 February 1914
[132] This is a point explored in Marc Brodie, *The Politics of the Poor: The East End of London, 1885-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2004), pp. 185-8, 190-92
[133] After the disestablishment of the Church in Wales many Jews expressed too their opposition 'on principle to any approach to a tax on the endowments of religious bodies', see the *Times*, 17 February 1914.

having a hard time because he was a Home Ruler and 'the electors of Leith Burghs ... are deeply stirred by the Ulster question, and are determined to make it the leading question at the present contest.'[134] At the same time a movement was launched to take parties of convinced Home Rulers or the merely undecided on educative tours of Ireland, so that they could be persuaded of the justice of Ulster's cause (of which more later). The organisers of the deputations to Ireland, being pleased to note that their reports were 'making quite an upheaval in some districts' also noted that 'the election in Leith was affected by it, because the report of the first deputation was considerably debated upon during the election.'[135] This proved perspicacious, as the Unionists took the seat for the first time since 1832.

One historian of Ulster Unionist activity in mainland Britain noted the significance of this result, for it was later revealed that large staffs of canvassers 'patiently working religious objections to home rule, for all they were worth and more, with the result that over and over again home rule canvassers ... came across liberals, strong church people, who told them that they had genuine scruples over the granting of Home Rule.'[136] The diaries of one leading Unionist bear this out. 'The Leith election was an immense surprise' wrote Robert Sanders, 'Both George Younger [Scottish Unionist chairman] and [John] Boraston [Chief Unionist agent] told me we had no chance. The result was caused by 600 to 800 Liberal abstentions.'[137] The loss of Leith (and Bethnal Green) rattled the government. Some Liberal-supporting newspapers insisted on treating these recent defeats as 'moral victories' and *Punch* noted mockingly that 'a few more of these moral victories and the language of triumph will be exhausted before an actual victory occurs.'[138]

As in 1913, sections of the Irish press detected sympathy towards the Covenanters from the Protestant working classes in Britain, made restive by Ulster. The Belfast based *Northern Whig* wrote that Ulster 'will be supported by thousands ... in England and Scotland', and it warned the government that their confrontation with the Unionists of Ireland would have greater consequences than they imagined. 'To bring civil war into our loyal, peaceful, and prosperous province may appear a slight matter to Mr Asquith and Mr Birrell', they wrote, but 'are they also prepared to face it in Glasgow, in Liverpool, and in other parts of Lancashire?'[139] This is something that some contemporary observers recognised, but which has slipped under the historical radar. This explains why, at the end of January, James Craig visited both Jarrow on Tyneside and St Helens in Lancashire in 72 hours, as he must surely have known that the ethnic and religious profile of these places made them amenable to Ulster's appeal.

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[134] *Times*, 26 February 1914
[135] Letter from Mr England to Harold Smith, 24 June 1914, BLO, CPA MS Selborne 78 (52)
[136] Patrick Buckland, *Ulster Unionism, vol. 2*, pp. 79-80
[137] Ramsden, ed., *Real Old Tory Politics*, p. 73, (5 March 1914).
[138] *Punch*, 4 March 1914
[139] *Northern Whig*, 3 March 1914

Jarrow was known as 'Little Ireland' but that is not to say that all of the Irish who lived there were Catholic.[140] In fact, by 1913, Jarrow had two Orange Lodges, and although the Unionists had not contested Liberal Jarrow until 1907, by 1909 there were 2,000 members of the Primrose League in the Town.[141] The Irish and indigenous protestant population of the town was therefore considerable and had turned out in force in 1912 to hear the Wesleyan Evangelist, J. J. Temple, warn that under Home Rule Roman Catholic institutions, particularly schools would henceforth be publicly funded, as had been the case in Canada.[142] Such demonstrations did not go uncontested. When two Irish Unionists came to Jarrow in March of that year to denounce Home Rule their meeting ended in disorder when local Irishmen objected to the description of Irish Nationalists as 'murderers' and the police were forced to intervene.[143] No surprise then that the Mechanic's Institute in Jarrow was 'packed in every part' to hear Craig declare that 'Ulster was a fair replica of Tyneside', and 'John Bull was an ugly man to threaten.'[144]

St Helens was a similar place: an industrial town with a massive Irish population of both Christian persuasions – leading to local working class Protestants becoming firm supporters of the union.[145] Indeed, a 'Twelfth' celebration in the town in 1867 had ended in bloody turmoil with fists and brickbats flying.[146] Consequently, St Helens gained a reputation by the turn of the century as a place where 'religious and Irish feelings still ran high'.[147] There had been major disturbances in the town as recently as 1910 following the local Orange Order's annual church parade.[148] And the defeat of the Labour candidate in December 1910 was put down by some to the defection of the Orange contingent among the local coal-miners.[149] Nearly four years later Craig was in the town hall to tell a meeting of St Helens Orangemen that 'there was no halfway house; they must be loyalist to the backbone or be traitors. (Loud Cheers).'[150] What is more, he was pleased to announce that 'we have the assurance of thousands and thousands of loyalists in Liverpool and throughout Lancashire that they are ready to help in our time of trouble.'[151]

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[140] See: P. O'Sullivan, *Little Ireland: A Short History of the Irish in Hebburn and Jarrow* (Newcastle, 1988); Jean Robinson, 'The Coming of the Irish to Jarrow and Hebburn', *Journal of the Northumberland and Durham Family History Society*, vol. 6, No. 3 (1981), pp. 70-71.

[141] It was reported in September 1913 that the town's Orange Lodge (LOL 432) sent the 'usual sum in aid of the Sir Edward Carson defence fund', see *Belfast Weekly News*, 11 September 1913.A. W. Purdue, 'Jarrow Politics, 1885-1914: The Challenge to Liberal Hegemony', *Northern History* XIII (1982), p. 182; Pugh, *Tories and the People*, p. 244

[142] *Jarrow Guardian*, 15 January 1912

[143] *Wallsend Herald and Advertiser*, 1 March 1912; *Jarrow Guardian* 1 March 1912

[144] *Jarrow Express and Tyneside Advertiser*, 30 January 1914

[145] Pelling, *Social Geography*, p. 266

[146] *St Helens Standard*, 27 April 1867; see also Lowe, *Lancashire*, p. 159

[147] T. C. Barker and J. R. Harris, *A Merseyside Town in the Industrial Revolution: St Helens, 1750-1900* (London: Frank Cass, 1993), pp. 279-284, 453-4, 476.

[148] *St Helens Reporter*, 22 July 1910, *St Helens Newspaper and Advertiser*, 25 July 1910

[149] *Manchester Guardian*, 8 December 1910

[150] *Liverpool Courier*, 2 February 1914. The Liberal *St Helens Newspaper and Advertiser*, thought that the Orangemen must have been 'disappointed with the attendance, the hall being little over half full', 3 February 1914

[151] *St Helens Reporter*, 3 February 1914

The coterminous development of the British Covenant movement also speaks of a tipping point that many Unionists had longed for. The editor of the hard-line Tory *Morning Post*, H. A. Gwynne, had written to Carson expressing his frustration with men who 'sit in office chairs and urge strong action' before volunteering his services should hostilities break out in Ireland.[152] Such was the temper of hard-line Unionist opinion in 1914, the question was how best to manifest this in a tangible way. Lord Milner though that if a British Covenant - inspired by the Ulster version of 1912 - enlisted great numbers it demonstrate the seriousness of the situation

> for when before, in our lifetime, have thousands upon thousands of sober steady-going citizens deliberately contemplated resistance to an Act of Parliament, because they sincerely believed it was devoid of all moral sanction? There are a great many people who still fail entirely to realise, what the strength of our feeling is on this subject.[153]

The scheme enjoyed the explicit support of the 'Thunderer' who published details of the form and explained that 'the declaration is regarded as a solemn undertaking, it is intended that arrangements should be made for signing with some degree of ceremony.' They also reminded their readers that 'the English public will do well to note' the disloyalty of Dublin, reporting that a British Army recruitment shown in Sackville Street 'was received with jeers and hisses by a considerable number of the audience; they sang 'Who fears to speak of '98', and gave cheers for the German Emperor.'[154] The staff of the UDL was soon under some pressure to cope with the work of collecting signatures as 'a number of people were waiting when the offices opened at 9am and the signatories arrived in a steady stream all day.'[155] One of the organisers, Herbert Gibbs, wrote to tell Milner that 'the stock exchange is now well organised and we have a man standing opposite the Royal Exchange taking signatures'.[156] As a consequence their original premises soon became inadequate, to this end the Primrose League offered their assistance and they soon opened a larger office at 64 Victoria St. Word quickly got back to Ulster and Carson was pleased to inform Craig that 'Milner's Covenant is going very strong.'[157]

It was indeed. Long lists of signatories soon appeared in the *Times*, and the sonorous titles of many of these British Covenanters made the register appear like the sort of *dramatis personae* that might precede a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta. They included:

> Sir Squire Bancroft, Mr H. Cosmo Bonsor, Colonel Ulick de Burgh, Alfred Farquhar, Sir Bartle Frere, Count Rene de l'Hopital, Sir Francis Fox (engineer), Surgeon Lieutenant-Colonel Odo Cross (late 1st Life Guards), the Provost of Ayr, Sir Alfred Fripp, Canon Knox-Little, Lord Leith of Fyvie, Major General Sartorius VC, Archdeacon Dunkerley, the Hon. Evelyn Hubbard, Canon Hurt the Bishop of New

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[152] Letter from HA Gwynne to Sir Edward Carson, 18 February 1914. PRONI, D/1507/A/5/10
[153] Letter from Viscount Milner to Selborne to the 2nd Earl of Selborne, 18 Jan, 1914. Boyce, ed., *The Crisis of British Unionism*, p. 102-3.
[154] *Times*, 4 March 1914
[155] *Times*, 5 March 1914
[156] Letter from Herbert Gibbs to Viscount Milner, 6 March 1914. BLO, MS Dep 41 (81)
[157] Letter from Sir Edward Carson to James Craig, 5 March 1914. PRONI, T/3775/2/6

Guinea, Prebendary Wadmore, Mr Lancelot Sanderson, and the Dukes of Newcastle and Somerset.[158]

Despite this dazzling nomenclature, the organisers of the movement were keen to stress that this was not merely an aristocratic cause (although it does seem as though aristocratic pressure to sign, upon local branches of the Primrose League for instance, would have been considerable).[159] 'The rush for forms to sign, so far from showing any abatement, is increasing steadily in volume. The demand comes from men and women of all ranks and stations of life', claimed the *Morning Post*. Indeed, a gentleman from the Midlands called personally at Head Office and asked to be supplied with bundles of forms. "I am going to distribute them in one hundred villages in the midland area. I am doing this purely as a voluntary worker who feels acutely on this subject of the threatened coercion of the loyal men of Ulster'; and it was noted that the LWMCA had sent a telegram which read 'Forms for 1,000 signatures quite insufficient. Please send today forms for 4,000 more.'[160] Furthermore, by early April 50,000 signatures had been appended to the Women's Covenant, and it was commented upon that 'Scotland and Wales have both responded excellently, and numbers of ladies have borne testimony to the strength of feeling across the border.'[161] Lord Milner wrote that 'this "Covenant" business is assuming enormous proportions', and spoke of 'the danger of its getting altogether out of hand and greater than we can possibly cope with', but he concluded, in a letter to his fellow fundamentalist Lord Willoughby de Broke, that 'we have at least done one thing already – we have given a good shake to the alleged "apathy" of the public.'[162]

Soon Covenant forms had been sent out for 1½ million signatures (not including the forms that were published in the regional press), and some business's had requested display signs that indicated that their premises could be used as a venue for signing the Covenant. The *Times* reported that 'the catholicity of the signatures is extraordinary. In one bundle of 100 newspaper cuttings appeared the signatures of working men, clergymen, doctors, officers of both services, two aldermen, a clerk of assize, and two baronets', furthermore, 'signed press coupons are being sent in large number from all parts of the country, including remote districts in Scotland and Wales.'[163] A good example of the publicity that the movement garnered in the provincial press was the full page advert published in the Tory *Manchester Courier*, the headline of which read

WE WILL FIGHT FOR THE UNITY OF EMPIRE – HOME RULERS COVET ULSTER'S WEALTH – WE WOULD REMAIN WITH YOU - ULSTER WILL FIGHT AND ULSTER WILL BE RIGHT

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[158] See the *Times* on the 4th, 5th, and 10th of March 1914.
[159] A Durham vicar (whose living was in the gift of the Londonderry family) telegraphed to say that 'Wynyard habitation is already signing the covenant.' See the telegram from the Reverend Wyldbore-Smith to the Marchioness of Londonderry, PRONI, D/2846/1/11/46.
[160] *Morning Post*, 6 March 1914
[161] *Times*, 4 April 1914
[162] Letter from Viscount Milner to the 19th Baron Willoughby de Broke, 6 March 1914. HLRO, WB/10/1. See also Terence H. O'Brien, *Milner: Viscount Milner of St James' and Cape Town, 1854-1925* (London: Constable, 1979), p. 251
[163] *Times*, 9 March 1914

The advert depicted a map of Ulster showing its chief industries, and it asked its readers to remember that

> Mr Redmond and Mr Devlin talk with buttered tongues in England. The Home Rulers cry in Derry was Home Rule and a Fenian King. The mayor of Dublin said he would accept no honours from a King of England. BUT KING GEORGE IS THE KING OF IRELAND.[164]

The *Times* for March was full of reports of Covenant signing activity, on the 24th it was reported that 'at Islington the signing place was besieged by a crowd of nearly 2,000 persons.' More ominously 'many army officers signed in various places on Saturday', and at 'a meeting of the veterans club ... after a unanimous decision ... proceeded to the Covenant office.'[165] As the Curragh incident will attest, the military was a hotbed of pro-Ulster feeling, but the Cavalry officers in Ireland were not the only Unionists with martial inclinations. At the end of March a Covenanters muster parade was convened in Chelsea. The occasion was the first muster of the men of 'No. 1 area' which comprised Chelsea, Battersea, Kensington, Fulham, Hammersmith, Paddington, and Westminster. 'Men from every class of life were standing to attention in the ranks, while the percentage of those that had seen active service was astonishing', reported the *Daily Telegraph*, 'the spirit of the gathering was the spirit of Sir Edward Carson himself, a spirit of determination to see the thing through come what may', what is more 'there were dozens of offers to provide rifles for the arming of a regiment.'[166] (It has been rightly pointed out that the essential difference between the British and the Ulster Covenant was illustrated by the fact that many of those on parade were Roman Catholics.)[167]

Although at least one historian has argued that young Unionist MPs were not moved by the appeal of Ulster as their forebears had been, the memoirs of one young Tory MP contradict this.[168] Earl Winterton, MP for Horsham in Norfolk from 1904, had resigned his commission in the Yeomanry 'to be free for any action necessary'[169] and recalled that there 'many young MPs who were ready to support Ulster in a physical sense', and the impressive numbers of MPs who took means to that end have been curiously ignored by posterity

> The number of us was greater, and the extent to which we were committed larger, than was known at the time or has been disclosed since. For instance, I formed what would

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[164] *Manchester Courier*, 9 March 1914
[165] *Times*, 24 March 1914
[166] *Daily Telegraph*, 17 March 1914
[167] Stewart, *Ulster Crisis*, p. 137. Interestingly, in December 1913, the Catholic Unionist Lord Edward Talbot wrote that a sister of his 'as strong and earnest a Papist as ever lived, wrote to me the other day: "If Carson succeeds, was there ever such a hero and genius since the world began!" Keep this from Orangeland, or at any rate the source whence it comes or you will be undone! Don't answer this is just to amuse and cheer you up.' See letter from Lord Edward Talbot to Sir Edward Carson, 17 December 1913. PRONI, D/1507/A/4/22
[168] Smith, *Tories and Ireland*, p. 8
[169] The Earl Winterton, *Pre-War* (London: Macmillan, 1932), p. 293

now be described as a Commando which was ready to give physical assistance to Northern Ireland and the Ulster Volunteers if the need arose.[170]

It seems astonishing that such open drilling should have been taking place in Britain for the first time since the Chartists were forging pikes and swords, but this activity was also mirrored in the sectarian tinderbox of Glasgow. In March intelligence sources estimated around 2,000 UVF men were drilling in Orange Halls in *Glasgow* (and a further 300 appeared for an inspection in Dalmarnock in July).[171] Their rivals were also mobilising too: by the middle of June there were estimates of 5,000 Nationalist volunteers in Glasgow, and over 800 in Edinburgh.[172] There were in fact seven Glasgow companies of the UVF attached to Orange Lodges: Calton, Cowcaddens, Clydebank, Kinning Park, Partick and Rutherglen, with the Grand Lodge turning 'a blind eye to any paramilitary activity.'[173] These companies euphemistically described themselves as 'athletic clubs', but they felt sufficiently confident to hold a parade of 500 men (many wearing military service and gallantry medals) in George Square. A large crowd was present and it was reported that 'perfect order prevailed and the men, who appeared to be well trained, marched with military precision. A special guard of about 30 men, armed with rifles, protected the colours.'[174]

Among the members of the established military there were also significant movements. Sir Phillip Sassoon, MP for Folkestone, in an address to a gathering of the Folkestone Battalion of the National Reserve, had stated his willingness, in the event of hostilities breaking out in Ulster to provide at his own expense a vessel to take the battalion over to Ireland, and the *Times* reported that 'this offer was received with cheers from the assembled reservists.'[175] Fellow feeling with the UVF within the Territorials must have been an issue, for Lord Roberts - after being informed of unease within the ranks - had helpfully written to the *Times* to explain that signing 'the British Covenant cannot possibly be held to conflict with the military duty of any officer or man of the Territorial Force' as long as the men in question were not on active duty.[176] This of course left a hostage to fortune, and two weeks later Lord Esher the President of the London Territorial Association announced to the press that if there was a movement of troops from Aldershot to Ireland 'we shall be faced with the resignation of 50 per cent of the officers and men of the London Territorial Force.'[177] Whether this would actually have

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[170] The Earl Winterton, *Orders of the Day* (London: Cassell, 1953), p. 38. As early as 1910, at a speech in Birkenhead, Winterton was 'encouraging Ulster's resistance to Home Rule by violence if necessary' and he noted that this was met with approval by the many local Orangemen present, see p. 50

[171] Elaine McFarland, '"How the Irish paid their debt": Irish Catholics in Scotland and voluntary enlistment, August 1914 – July 1915', *Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. LXXXII, 2: 214 (2003), p. 269

[172] *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 13 June 1914

[173] William S. Marshall, *The Billy Boys: A Concise History of Orangeism in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 1996), pp. 98, 100

[174] *Glasgow Herald*, 30 March 1914

[175] *Times*, 23 March 1914

[176] Milner wrote to Roberts that 'a good many Territorial officers, wanting very much to sign, are uneasy, whether doing so would be inconsistent with holding a commission', see letter from Viscount Milner to Earl Roberts, 6 March 1914, BLO, MS Milner dep 16, and the *Times*, 9 March 1914

[177] *Times*, 23 March 1914

been the case is unclear but there is evidence of disquiet among the ranks of serving military personnel.

As early as March 1913 Winston Churchill had received evidence had of disquiet in the army with a report that the officers of several infantry regiments stationed in Ireland intend to resign rather than fight in Ulster.[178] And F. E. Smith and Leo Amery had to persuade the adjutants of three Guards battalions not to resign and join the UVF.[179] All this moved some to suggest that a guarantee fund be instituted to provide for the families of serving officers who decide to resign rather than participate in hostilities against Ulster.[180] What is more, a sketchy report from Belfast claimed that two companies of the Dorset Regiment serving in Ulster 'threw down their rifles when ordered to march to the neighbourhood of Ormiston, the residence of Colonel Chichester [a UVF officer] and one sergeant is recorded to have exclaimed "We will not have Home Rule."'[181] The effect on discipline that active operations in Ulster would have had been anticipated in late 1913 by Lord Roberts who wrote colourfully that he had let the King know that 'a British regiment could not be called upon to fire upon citizen soldiers who are fighting under the union jack, without dangerously affecting discipline', and that they must make Asquith realise that 'it would destroy the army'.[182]

Whether the army would be destroyed by the Ulster question is a moot point, but the likelihood of mutiny among the rank and file, as opposed to just the officer class, has rarely been considered but in March 1914 mutterings from the soldiery were becoming increasingly audible (and reported in Cabinet).[183] This had been anticipated in late 1913 when the Spectator mused on 'the difficulties of employing English and Scottish Protestant troops against the Ulster Protestants', for 'the moment civil war begins it will be a religious war in the essentials.'[184] In due course the action of the Dorsets soon became common knowledge among all the troops stationed in Belfast and a special reporter from the *Daily Express* managed to speak with some of the soldiers to gage their opinion 'All with whom I talked applauded the alleged act, and said that when the time came they would do the same' reported A. G. Hales. 'The men seem proud of their officers who resigned [and] many of the private soldiers make no secret of the fact that they would not fight against Ulster in any circumstances.' How close there came to being a 'Belfast mutiny' is unknown but the *Express* man noted that the 'privates speak far more bitterly and threaten more openly than their officers.'[185]

News of such dissent filtered through to the Ulster Unionists who must have been pleased to note that the government's threats against them were contingent upon the disposition

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[178] Letter from Julian Haslem to Winston Churchill, 23 March 1913. CCC, CHAR 2/62/17
[179] Leo Amery, *My Political Life, Volume 1. England before the Storm, 1896-1914* (London: Hutchinson, 1953), p. 448
[180] Letter from Mr Stephens to Viscount Milner, 17 March 1914, BLO, MS Milner Dep 41
[181] *Weekly Despatch*, 22 March, 1914
[182] Letter from the Earl Roberts to Viscount Milner, 2 Nov 1913 , BLO, MS Milner Dep 16 (212-13)
[183] David, ed., *Inside Asquith's Cabinet*, p. 165
[184] *The Spectator*, 1 November 1913
[185] *Daily Express*, 23 March 1914

of the military, whose relations with the UVF were very close.[186] 'I hear now that a large number of Noncommisioned [sic] Officers and men are saying that nothing will induce them to take sides against Ulster,' noted James Craig in a letter to Bonar Law, and furthermore, 'many have said, that they will join us in the event of an outbreak.'[187] Indeed, Law even received letters from serving officers stationed in Ireland. Writing from Ulster, a Major Tweedie from the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Scots imparted to the Unionist leader the portentous information that

> the whole of the sergeants and Lance-sergeants [in the regiment], with the exception of three, are heart and soul with Ulster. These men have formed their opinions entirely without argument, persuasion or suggestion from their officers, who do not discuss such things with their subordinates ... I feel especially certain that the same feeling pervades the other ranks from Corporals to Privates.

He also added that the officers feel bitterly about the 'those grossly untrue statements of Labour members and others as to our aristocratic & class leanings', and he claimed that 7 out of 10 officers in his mess had said that they 'would not take the field against Ulster.'[188] There were even some rumblings from the senior service, which had hitherto been steadfastly loyal.[189] Through a letter written on 'H.M.S. Lurcher'-headed notepaper, Law was informed by an Engineer Lieutenant called Francis Ranken that before leaving the South coast for Ulster he had informed the captain of his ship 'that I had signed the Brit. Covenant & that I should be no Party to any aggressive move against Ulster', upon which his commanding officer threatened to have him arrested.[190]

What made such acts of quasi-mutiny possible was the widespread and genuine disgust within the military at the thought of coercing Ulster. What is more, wealthy sympathisers offered to provide a financial safety net for any would be conscientious objectors. Sir Marcus Samuel had telegraphed to the *Times* from Biarritz that he was 'deeply moved by the patriotism of the officers who have resigned their commissions and risked the ruin of their careers rather than spill the blood of loyal subjects of his Majesty', and pledged £10,000 to start a fund 'to relieve the material needs of those officers' families who may require assistance' provided the Unionist Party agree to reinstate the commissions of any officer who resigns over the issue.[191]

We know that from late 1913 senior, moderate Unionists like Austen Chamberlain were expressing unhappiness with the thought of an escalation in militancy from their own side that would inevitably lead to 'anarchy', and Lord Lansdowne noted in the House of Lords

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[186] Hew Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 112
[187] Letter from James Craig to Andrew Bonar Law, 23 March 1914. HLRO, BL/32/1/54
[188] Letter from Major G. S. Tweedie (2nd Bn. Royal Scots) to Andrew Bonar Law, 25 March 1914. HLRO, BL/32/1/62
[189] Churchill told his cabinet colleagues that Admiral Bayly at Lamlash had warned all his Captains that the first officer to hesitate would be court-martialled on the spot., see David, ed., *Inside Asquith's Cabinet*, p. 165
[190] Letter from Engineer-Lieutenant Francis Ranken (aboard H.M.S. Lurcher) to Andrew Bonar Law, 26 March 1914. HLRO, BL/32/1/67
[191] *Times*, 23 March 1914

that 'few of us recall any occasion when there has been greater public anxiety, I would almost say acute public distress.'[192] Inevitably those on the Government's side thrilled were also disheartened to see the more atavistic forces of Conservatism so rampant. A delighted J.P. Croal, editor of the *Scotsman*, wrote a discursive letter to his friend Bonar Law in which he pointed out that a recent series of articles in *Manchester Guardian* regarding Home Rule 'proved that the Lancashire Radicals are very fidgetty [sic] about Ulster' and that undoubtedly 'the Lancashire people are very nervous about the Irish Protestants.'[193]

They may have been nervous about the Lancashire Protestants too. In February, it was minuted that Unionists in the North West had 'express[ed] their determination to further the cause of Ulster in their respective divisions.'[194] In Liverpool this led to drastic action. By 1914 the Liverpool contingent of the UVF numbered some 1,500, and there was certainly a bitter reaction in the city to the Curragh mutiny – at least among the members of the City Council.[195] Councillor James Sexton, and later leader of the Dockers' Union,[196] tabled a motion condemning the officers at the centre of the Curragh mutiny for what he believed to be

> A flagrant abuse of their power, a usurpation of the constitutional rights of the people through their representatives and a danger a menace to the peace of our own city in case of a repetition of the disturbances of 1911; and as the elected representatives of a city likely to be seriously affected by such an example expresses its vigorous opposition to such a policy.

William Rathbone, the Mayor, persuaded him to withdraw, stating that

> so far the citizens of Liverpool have, despite the intensity of their feelings on the questions involved, shown a most commendable restraint. It would, indeed, be most regrettable if any action taken by this council should tend to disturb this peaceful attitude of the citizens.[197]

There was certainly no restraint from 'Shamrock' (the nom-de-plum of a correspondent to the *Liverpool Courier*) who wrote that the Liberals intended 'to disrupt our United Kingdom to appease the greedy maw of a Romish Pope's adherents!' Shamrock also believed that if one was

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[192] Letter from Austen Chamberlain to the 19th Lord Willoughby de Broke, 23 November 1913. HLRO, WB/6/9; *Times*, 24 March 1914

[193] Letter from J P Croal to Andrew Bonar Law, 18 March 1914. HLRO, BL/31/4/31

[194] Minutes of meeting held on 28 February 1914, in the Minute Book of the Lancashire and Cheshire Federation of Junior Unionist Organisatons, p. 70. BLO, CPA ARE 3/16/2

[195] Waller, *Democracy and Sectarianism*, p, 268

[196] For a study of his life see Sir James Sexton, *Sir James Sexton, Agitator: The Life of a Dockers' M.P.* (London: Faber and Faber, 1936); for other useful studies of Irish Nationalist politics in Liverpool see B. O'Connell, 'Irish Nationalism in Liverpool, 1873-1923', *Eire-Ireland*, 10 (1975); Sam Davies, '"A Stormy Political Career": P. J. Kelly and Irish Nationalist and Labour Politics in Liverpool, 1891-1936', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 148 (1999), pp. 147-189

[197] *Liverpool Daily Post and Mercury*, 2 April 1914

to take the Home Rule Bill seriously loyal Protestants are bound to hark back to those darksome days when to read one's bible meant the stake if discovered. And yet those professed Protestants [in the government] are backing Fenians whose one aim is the establishment of the Pope in Ireland, and ultimately to squeeze out of existence the Protestant minority.[198]

Hardcore bigotry was alive and well on Merseyside then, and, indeed the Liverpool-based *Catholic Times* fulminated that 'the subsidising of the of the regular expert enemies of the Catholic Church to traduce the Catholics of Ireland is part of the contemptible political game the Unionists are playing.'[199] It was, therefore, perhaps as well that the Unionists did not go through with a plan they had cooked up in February when Bonar Law had written to Lord Lansdowne explaining that leading lights in the Party were planning 'an immense demo [sic] in Liverpool in sympathy with Ulster. They talk of getting something like half a million men to attend, and they want practically all the leading men of our Party to be present.'[200]

Whether wiser councils prevailed - considering the mood in Liverpool - is unknown but the Curragh mutiny certainly did provide a convenient opportunity to stage a massive demonstration that some Unionists had evidently long wished to arrange - as an earlier memorandum had argued that '[t]he first object should be to make a demonstration so formidable as to impress the government and bring it to reason.'[201] But instead of convening at 'the metropolis of Protestant and Conservative principles'[202] (as Salvidge once described Liverpool), Ulster's friends would instead gather in that other Metropolis, London.

III

The outcry from all Unionist quarters when news of the Curragh incident broke was deafening. A plan was quickly formulated to convene a massive demonstration in Hyde Park to protest against the government's handling of the affair, which the *Times* claimed was a result of 'a general demand made by all classes of the community and not limited to Unionists.'[203] The Unionist *Daily Express* concurred, and stressed that the proposed meeting was politically non-partisan, it being 'a general demand made by all the classes of the community and is not limited to Unionists.' Preliminary arrangements were being placed in the hands of a committee composed of representatives from all the Unionist organisations in the city including the Union Defence League, the BLSUU, and the

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[198] *Liverpool Courier*, 2 April 1914
[199] *Catholic Times and Catholic Opinion*, 3 April 1914
[200] They planned to stage this rally 'this day four weeks hence', which would have meant it being staged at the height of the Curragh controversy, see letter from Andrew Bonar Law to the Marquis of Lansdowne, 28 February 1914. HLRO, BL/34/2/35.
[201] 'Memorandum', BLO, Add Mss Eng Hist C.689 (181)
[202] Speech given by Salvidge at the Sun Hall, see *Liverpool Courier*, 12 January 1906
[203] *Times*, 23 March 1914

Primrose League.[204] Initial response to this proposal was so promising that the *Daily Graphic* thought that the rally promised 'to be one of the largest ever held in London', *despite* the publication of a speaking line-up that was hardly stellar - consisting of 'Lord Londonderry, Lord Charles Beresford, Mr Walter Long, and Mr Hayes Fisher.' Although it was also announced that 'deputations will attend from Ulster and the other provinces of Ireland', including the Ulster leader himself.[205] This was the key, as no other Unionist was as adulated, or had the pulling power of Edward Carson.

An internal memorandum drawn up in March and set to Lord Milner, noted that Carson 'has a greater power over public opinion than is at present enjoyed by any of his colleagues', and that, in short, he has a 'moral authority'.[206] Indeed, before his sixtieth birthday on the 9th of February the secretary of the patriotic 'Union Jack Committee' requested in the press that

> that every Unionist and Ulster volunteer, and those who are adherents of the empire movement should prominently display a union jack from their window on Monday in recognition of so significant an event and as a token of birthday congrats to our fearless leader.[207]

The draw of Carson and a chance to demonstrate in support of Ulster generated a massive response. 'Over a million applications have been received at the offices of the protest committee in Westminster', reported the *Belfast Telegraph*, 'and large numbers of these were from the provinces, although it was the idea of the organisers to limit the protest to the Metropolis.'[208]

While Hyde Park was to be the epicentre of pro-Ulster sentiment, the Belfast press was full of other cheering stories of fellow feeling from England and Scotland. On the same day as the Hyde Park rally it was reported that a 'prominent Leamington gentleman' had written to a friend in Belfast to tell him that 'Irish affairs are causing things to 'hum' in the old country at present', high time 'for the people here have been culpably apathetic of the real state of affairs in Ulster.' The paper also received a heartening message from the Presbytery of Ireland who 'view with profound concern the grave political situation which has arisen in the North of Ireland to the peril of social peace and religious liberty.'[209]

On the morning of the Hyde Park rally the *Times* published a detailed list of all 22 muster points in the metropolis, from where these separate contingents would process to the park with banners flying, as well as a plan of the fourteen platforms from which various Unionist orators would speak before Carson arrived. They informed their readers that 'those who wish to join the procession will meet at these points between 1.45 and 2

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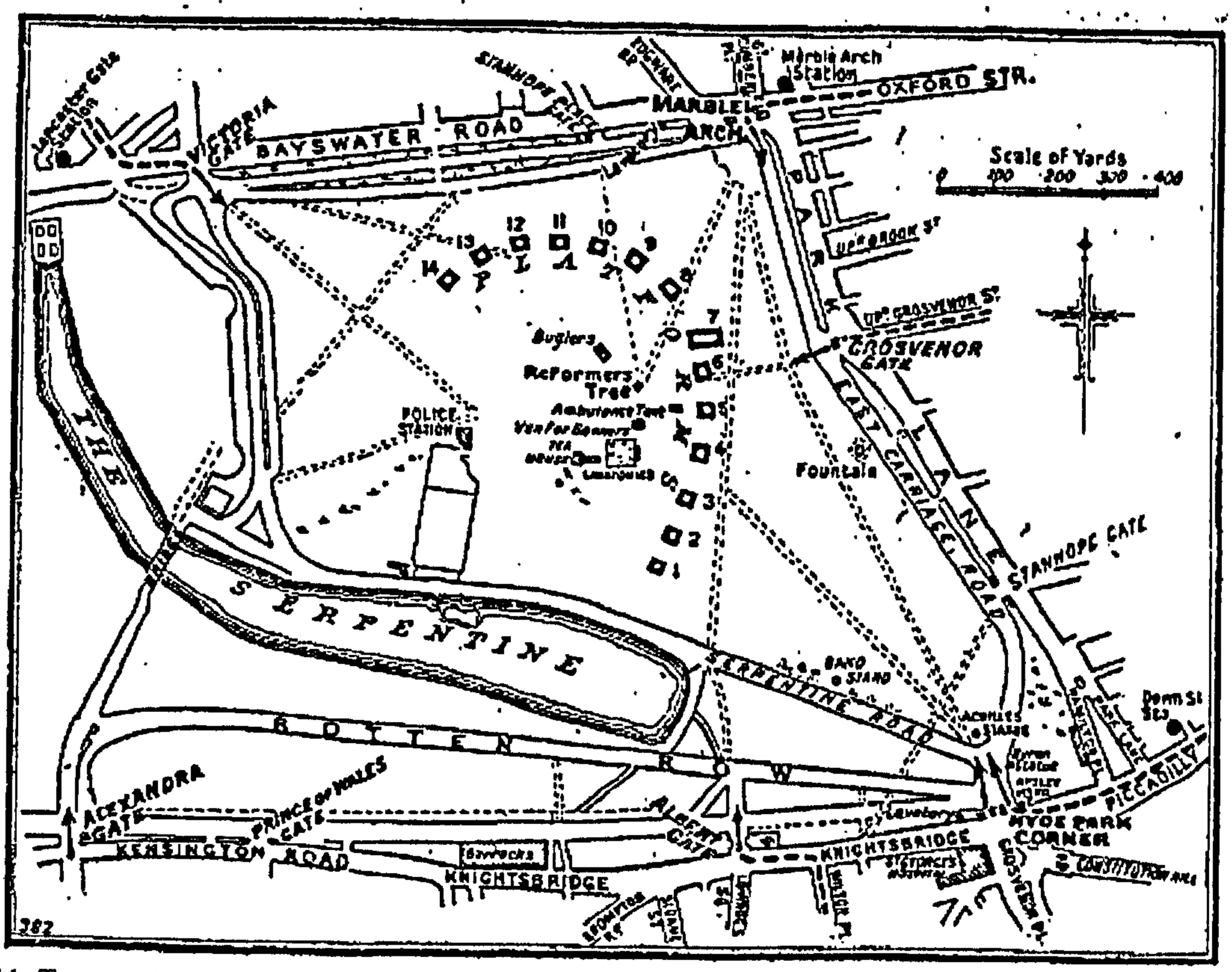
[204] *Daily Express*, 23 March 1914
[205] *Daily Graphic*, 25 March 1914
[206] 'Memorandum on the present political situation' written by F. S. Oliver, 3 March 1914. BLO, MP/Add Mss Eng Hist C.689 (68)
[207] Letter from James Wagner, see *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 7 February 1914
[208] *Belfast Telegraph*, 3 April 1914
[209] *Belfast Telegraph*, 4 April 1914

o'clock, and will then march to Cleopatra's Needle, whence at 3 a combined procession will leave for the park. Each section will be headed by a banner and a band.'[210] The *Pall Mall Gazette* published the same information, but concluded with the exhortation: 'to Hyde park then, all those who would make good the watchword of the covenant – "No coercion".[211] An indication of the fractious political climate is provided by the fact that the demonstration committee expected some Suffragette disruption, and that the Labour Party had convened a meeting in Trafalgar Square for the same day to protest against the Government's 'privileged treatment of Tory politicians and Army Officers.'[212]

PLATFORM PLAN FOR THE PROTEST DEMONSTRATION.



11. The map of Hyde Park that appeared in the *Times* on 4 April 1914 - note the 'ven[ue] for banners', and the position of the buglers.

'The world's metropolis and the metropolis of Irish industry joined hands on Saturday', ran the opening line of *Belfast Telegraph*'s report.

> How tremendously the Ulster question has gripped the public mind is indicated by the fact that upon a few days' notice it brought together the hugest gathering of people that has ever assembled in London for a common purpose.[213]

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[210] *Times*, 4 April 1914
[211] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 4 April 1914
[212] *Daily Chronicle*, 4 April 1914
[213] *Belfast Telegraph*, 6 April 1914

'Does London care?' asked the *Pall Mall Gazette*. 'To have doubted it were an insult. London does care.'[214] A reporter from the *Liverpool Courier* drooled that 'this mighty gathering of the British Covenanters surpassed any public demonstration I have ever seen either in London or the provinces ... awe-inspiring in its magnitude as a human panorama' and he even conceded that it made the Liverpool rally of September 1912 'sink into insignificance.'[215] The *Manchester Courier* spoke of a 'vast stream of humanity that converged on Hyde Park on Saturday [that] came in response to ideas and ideals adopted centuries ago, and which are now the foundations of our national character.'[216]According to the *Daily Express* it was 'an overwhelming great demonstration that would have impressed the most cynical Fenian ... for an hour and a half a Niagara of men and women poured through Hyde Park's eight gates.'[217] The *Times* spoke of the people coming 'in shoals from the 32 points of the compass.'[218]

With regard to numbers, the *Observer* had reckoned that the crowd numbered around 200,000, though the police had erred towards the more conservative estimate of 100,000.[219] Sir Joseph Lawrence, writing in the *Morning Post* had made the calculation that considering its dimensions there must be standing room in Hyde Park 'for 1,548,500 persons' and the ground seemed completely covered to him, though as he put it, it was all conjecture as 'no one has any standard of comparison.'[220] Even the *Manchester Guardian* admitted that the 'numbers were quite impressive' with a 'good proportion of working men', and 'a striking' percentage of women in attendance. (Although, it claimed, 'London crowds are not good; judged by Northern standards, either at cheering, or at choral singing'.)[221] However, the Liberal *Daily Chronicle* insisted that 'no records were broken by the Ulster 'non Party' demonstration.[222] (At the Live8 Concert in 2005 there were reputedly 200,000 in Hyde Park, and aerial photographs showed the park to be around three quarters full.) Whatever the exact figure, the Edwardian public were no strangers to massive crowds – on the same day as the Hyde Park rally, some 125,000 spectators watched Scotland beat England 3-1 at Hampden Park in Glasgow[223] – therefore, it is more than likely that this demonstration was, indeed, massive.

The Covenanter, the magazine of the BLSUU, reported the rally in some detail, and claimed that 'success, excelling the most sanguine anticipation, attended the demonstration of British covenanters in Hyde Park.' Their report inadvertently revealed some detail about the sort of people who they were aiming to recruit. 'Circumstances were not wholly propitious' noted the Covenanter, 'a spell of fine weather had made

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[214] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 6 April 1914
[215] *Liverpool Courier*, 6 April 1914
[216] *Manchester Courier* 6 April 1914
[217] *Daily Express*, 6 April 1914
[218] *Times*, 6 April 1914
[219] *Observer*, 5 April 1914
[220] *Morning Post*, 6 April 1914. Extant photographs certainly do suggest that the meeting was enormous.
[221] *Manchester Guardian*, 6 April 1914
[222] *Daily Chronicle*, 6 April 1914
[223] *Glasgow Herald*, 6 April 1914

many lay their plans for excursions far a-field.'[224] It is noticeable how the Unionists were concerned to attract the more capricious sort of demonstrator: as for all the talk of commitment and sympathy, Tory crowds like these often comprised the type who would abandon politics for a day out. It is interesting therefore that in the classic *Ulster Crisis*, its author spoke of the thousands of men, women and children who came to Hyde Park 'in holiday spirit.'[225] J. L. Garvin in the *Observer*, wrote that it was only patriotism that could get men 'to give up their weekly half-holiday to mark their political opinions' though he did admit that for many, Hyde Park demonstrations were noted as a 'pleasurable "day out."'[226] It was noticeable that most Unionist gatherings in this period could be so described, and it was no coincidence that the prelude to the rally should have been so carnivalesque as to rival the temptations of the seaside. In fact there were many who had come into London from the coast and scenic local parts. 'Men of Kent ... and Kentish men, and men of Wiltshire, and others yet more remote,'[227] indeed a contingent of 500 arrived at Charing Cross from Sevenoaks. Salisbury and Eastbourne sent 500 and 300 men respectively.[228]

Fourteen speaking platforms had been erected in Hyde Park, and they formed a huge semi-circle between the Serpentine and the Bayswater Road. This was the destination for the processionists who marched in their thousands through central London - interspersed with interested bystanders who swelled the crowds. The demonstration had been advertised as a non-Party event, although many started off from Conservative Clubs, and prominent among this body was the City and Stock Exchange contingents, conspicuous in their silk hats and black coats – surely a perfect example of the 'city and the mob' that had come to define Tory appeal.[229] These plutocrats were followed by the Ladies' Imperial Club, with each of the ladies carrying a union jack. 'Then, with soldierly tread' observed the *Times*, the men of the BLSUU arrived in the Park, 'a serviceable force which divided into guards for each of the platforms.'[230] These men who were 'the volunteers enlisted in England to help the Ulster cause'[231] had elicited the interest of the regulars in Chelsea barracks, as 'the soldiers turned out in large numbers to watch the procession.'[232]

Indeed, the reportage in the Tory press - as always - had a distinctly martial tinge. 'It was especially touching in Chelsea to note the reverence which the old scarlet-coated pensioners saluted the colours under which they had fought in the empire's cause' remarked the man from the *Liverpool Courier* - who even contrived to insert an allusion to Ulster into his extravagant prose – 'their medals told of gallant deeds in many climes when they, with men of Ulster blood, grappled with the foes of the Union Jack, while the

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[224] *The Covenanter*, 20 May 1914
[225] Stewart, *Ulster Crisis*, p. 73
[226] *Observer*, 5 April 1914
[227] *Observer*, 5 April 1914
[228] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 4 April 1914
[229] Geoffrey Wheatcroft, *The Strange Death of Tory England* (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 25
[230] *Times*, 6 April 1914
[231] *Daily Express*, 6 April 1914
[232] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 4 April 1914

flying bullets whistled the song of death in their ears.'[233] Indeed, there had been a rumour that Territorials from Islington 'had been asked to Hyde Park in uniform in return for a payment of 1s. 6d', indignantly denied by Sir Harry S. Samuel, M.P. the Chairman of the London Protest Committee.[234]

Then followed the borough deputations who marched with banners that 'bore the simple device "Chelsea – or Walworth – or Hoxton Supports Loyal Ulster"', though one or two were more creative, as 'one banner was inscribed 'Dulwich defies Dublin.'[235] At one point in the afternoon there was an unbroken procession Westminster to Blackfriars. Riding on a bus from Battersea, the London correspondent of the *Liverpool Courier* came across a Party of 'brawny Scots every one of whom wore the Ulster favour', who had composed an alternative version of 'Scots Wha Hae', which they sang boisterously

'Wa wad be a traitor knave?'
Asquith
'Wha wad fill a coward's grave?'
Asquith
'Wha sae bear as be a slave?'
Asquith to Redmond
'Let him turn and flee!'
He's gone tae Fife
'Lay the proud usurpers low!'
Hurrah!
'Tyrants fall with every foe.'
Hurrah!
'Liberty's in every blow!'
Hurrah!
'On tae victory!'
Three cheers for Ulster! [236]

The *Times* noted that the Union Jack hung from Piccadilly windows, but also 'omnibuses, motor-cars, bicycles, coster's barrows, and even the dustcart of a road sweeper', and that thousands wore medallions bearing Carson's image.[237]Arriving simultaneously were cavalcades of aristocratic carriages and proletarian brakes, indeed much was made of the 'representative character' of the gathering. '"Duke's son, cook's son, son of a belted earl" with infinite variations of class and calling', described the *Liverpool Courier*, were all 'represented in that colossal host which advanced to the trysting place, with ensigns spread, with purpose firm, and with ears tingling to the music of patriotic airs.'[238] A claim

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[233] *Liverpool Courier*, 6 April 1914
[234] *Times*, 4 April 1914; *Catholic Times and Catholic Opinion*, 10 April 1914
[235] *Observer*, 5 April 1914
[236] *Liverpool Courier*, 6 April 1914
[237] *Times*, 6 April 1914
[238] *Liverpool Courier*, 6 April 1914. The paper noted that there were conspicuous similarities between the rallies at Sheil Park and Hyde Park: 'the marshalling of the forces from far-distant outposts, and the marching of the processions from numerous points of mobilisation to the great review ground, was carried out with the same admirable precision.'

The Daily Herald

No. 105, [Registered at the G.P.O. as a Newspaper.] FRIDAY, JUNE 13, 1913. ONE HALFPENNY.

MEETING A DELICATE SITUATION WITH DIGNITY.

[We make no apology for reproducing this topical cartoon with a sympathetic dedication to the person who is being kicked.]

THE SAMSON OF LIBERALISM, whose locks some unnamed Delilah has lately shorn (manfully pretending that nothing is happening in Ulster): "Ah, if this were only a woman to what sublime heights of retaliation I should soar!"

12. *The Daily Herald* (13 June 1914) pulls no punches. Carson on the right.

poetically echoed in *The Covenanter*

> Grosvenor Street rubbed shoulders with Whitechapel, Throgmorton Avenue fraternised with the Old Kent Road, Bethnal Green and Berkeley Square consorted in common enthusiasm. Peers struggled for places near the platforms with dockers from the East End.[239]

The unusual presence of so many upper class demonstrators was treated with slightly less reverence by the Liberal and Labour press. 'Never before had so much good tailoring marched to Hyde Park demonstrate' scoffed the *Manchester Guardian*, with their toppers and carnation buttonholes, their sticks and umbrellas (clutched – Light-Infantry style – at the trail), and their banners - carried not by themselves but by commissionaires from Clubland - they did present a slightly comic aspect. Furthermore, these 'Top hatted and be-spatted "bloods" from Piccadilly and Pall Mall clubs [were] there to watch the people demonstrate for them', and these well dressed folk were later were to be seen 'withdrawing their cigars to sing, very feebly, O God our help in ages past.'[240]

In a report entitled 'Orange Oratory in Hyde Park', the *Daily Chronicle* thought that 'London's workers were strangely absent' and the gathering was comprised mainly of 'society people, with their carriages in serried ranks' who had to run 'the gauntlet of the bus conductors wit.'[241] The *Daily Herald* did not deny that there were working men in attendance at the 'great galanty show [sic]', but 'as many of the demonstrators were secured for the comparatively cheap price of 1s. 6d. per head it is easy to see where the stage thunder came from on Saturday.' They claimed that the whole thing had been engineered by the Primrose League and the Women's Tariff Reform Association 'who splashed money about on men and beer in the interests of the Tory Party.' The Socialist champion contemptuously described the meeting as 'a religious fit', and noted that after the resolutions were passed 'the travellers from near and far dispersed to spend their eighteenpences [sic] in the nearest hostelries.'[242]

Proceedings were scheduled to begin at 4.30 in the afternoon but as the crowds began to sing 'O God our help' processionists were still arriving in their thousands amidst fitful rain showers. As there were hundreds of thousands of people present it was inevitable that should be some disturbance, and a Party of suffragettes in a dog-cart made a foray into crowd shouting 'votes for women',[243] and a determined band of Socialists managed to haul snatch a Union Jack from Carson's platform and briefly hoisted their own Red Flag. 'There was heavy fighting and bleeding noses' wrote a suffragette in the *Manchester Guardian*, 'just to show that this was an Irish affair.'[244] Although considering

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[239] *The Covenanter*, 20 May 1914
[240] *Manchester Guardian*, 6 April 1914
[241] *Daily Chronicle*, 6 April 1914
[242] *Daily Herald*, 6 April 1914
[243] Two of these suffragettes, Mrs Drummond and Miss Rogers, were up in front of the magistrate at Marlborough Street the following Monday charged with obstructing the police. When they were sentenced Mrs Drummond shouted "where is Carson and all those Unionists!", see *Times*, 7 April 1914
[244] *Manchester Guardian*, 6 April 1914

the number of scuffles, the fact that the only reported casualty was 'a man from Woolwich [who] got his eye cut' would suggest that was negligible bloodshed.[245] At 5.30 the sound of buglers from the Veterans Club signalled that the orators should halt their speeches, and 'the roar of assent' was given to the following resolution

> We protest against the use of the navy and the army to drive out by force of arms our fellow-subjects in Ireland from their full heritage in the parliament of the United Kingdom. And we demand that the government shall immediately subject this grave issue to the people.[246]

As the speakers addressed the park simultaneously the crowds could wander between the platforms, with most gravitating toward Balfour, and Carson - who told them that many in the crowd had called out "Stick to it Sir Edward", to which he replied "I am going to stick to it", amid cheers.'[247] These circumstances were not favourable to speechmaking, and most speakers kept their utterances brief. In a letter to his wife Austen Chamberlain described how the 'imposing' crowd made speaking difficult

> I feel that if I did that sort of thing three Saturday's running I should infallibly become a kind of third rate Jim Larkin, incapable of argument or reason, husky-voiced and blatant ... When one is strained to the utmost to make one's voice carry as far as possible, and still cannot reach the limits of the audience, when one cannot indeed tell how much is audience, reason and argument go by the board.[248]

Listening to speeches was not the point of these Unionist demonstrations. To the committed, the most fundamental aspect of such events was the sense of participation in a grand ceremony that it imparted, the feeling of solidarity with your fellows it signified, the expression of identification with a cause that it denoted, and the act of adoration of a chosen leader that it manifested. To the uncommitted it was a grand day out (and the Unionists probably hoped that enjoyment of which would lead to support for their Party). Two press reports captured these differing views of the same event, with the *Morning Post* describing the culmination of the afternoon with a biblical fervour

> At 5.30 when the resolution was passed and with a roar like that of breaking waves the acclamations of the great multitude swelled up and rolled across the park, and again the great tidal wave of humanity foamed into colour ... and to enhance the impressiveness of the effect just at that moment the westering sun came out from behind a cloud and across the park a radiance of slanting light that transfigured everything it touched [including the faces of the leaders], it was an event the dignity and significance of which defy disparagement or misrepresentation and which proves

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[245] *Daily Express*, 6 April 1914
[246] *Times*, 6 April 1914
[247] *Observer*, 5 April 1914
[248] Fatigued by the experience, Chamberlain decided that he would go the countryside, 'pick primroses and forget about politics for a week.' Austen Chamberlain, *Politics from the Inside: An Epistolary Chronicle* (London: Cassell, 1936), pp. 637.

beyond doubt challenge the reality of the sympathy kindled in the hearts of the people for Ulster's resistance to Home Rule.[249]

Contrast that with a Hamilton Fyfe sketch that appeared in the *Daily Mail* which manages to convey the less earnest side of Edwardian excursionists, who probably made up as much as great a proportion of the crowd as any pro-Ulster zealots

> I had a hallucination that I was in Ulster again ... it was only with effort that I recollected that these were Londoners ... women marchers too unafraid of the weather their eyes shone with enthusiasm ... thousands came in couples ... 'mid-way' non partisan folk were out in force [and] one could see that they did not care for the purely Party speeches ... their eyes wandered to the sky now blue after the rainstorms ... but how they cheered for Carson crying Carson! Carson! As I left the park the street-sellers were calling "Death of 'Ome Rule, Death of 'Ome Rule memorial card one penny." I think it was more than an omen.[250]

13. *The Covenanter*, 20 May 1914

[249] *Morning Post*, 6 April 1914
[250] *Daily Mail*, 6 April 1914

6

'Firing the Heather':
Rousing support for Ulster throughout Great Britain

Popular electioneering demonstrations may be considered an attenuated form of rebellion

Elie Halevy, *A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century*, 3 vols (1913; New York, 1949), I: *England in 1815*, p. 152

On the day before those thousands demonstrated in Hyde Park, the Prime Minister had set off for Scotland. Upon the resignation of his Secretary of State for War following the Curragh fiasco Asquith took up the portfolio himself, and as a consequence was forced to undergo the formality of re-election to his seat in Fife, which was the convention at the time. Interestingly, his train-journey north became perhaps the only episode when ordinary Liberals were given the opportunity to demonstrate their support for the Prime Minister in his dispute with the Ulstermen. This episode provides us with an opportunity to contrast the different approach to political ceremony between the Unionists and the Liberals.

A large crowd of well-wishers, including 100 members of parliament, gathered at King's Cross to give him an enthusiastic send off, with many 'slapping his back, shaking his hand, and 'singing 'Rule Britannia.''[1] The *Times* added another perspective, claiming his journey north was an 'ordinary affair' and 'only in a mild sense triumphal.' It also observed the conspicuousness of his police bodyguard who joined him in his carriage and 'the presence in some numbers of the local constabulary at all the stations that he stopped at.'[2] The *Globe* reported that provisions had been made for Liberals to meet the Prime Minister at all the stations he passed through. At Grantham only a welcoming Party of local Liberals was allowed onto the platform.[3]

At York he was met by around 200 supporters who presented him with an illuminated address printed on vellum which spoke of alleged Tory meddling with army discipline 'having aroused the deepest indignation in the breasts of all Liberals.'[4] Though it becomes obvious that the demonstration itself was poorly organised, with a number of distinguished local personages (such as the Sheriff of York) being unable to get into 'the

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[1] *Daily Chronicle*, 4 April 1914
[2] *Times*, 4 April 1914
[3] *Globe*, 4 April 1914
[4] It was signed by, among others, the chocolate manufacturer and social reformer Seebohm Rowntree, see *Yorkshire Gazette*, 6 April 1914

reserved area beside the representatives of the Unionist newspapers.'[5] At Newcastle there was greater enthusiasm, and the station authorities had to issue tickets for access to the platform, where hundreds of supporters were marshalled by the Railway Police. Liberal cabinet member Walter Runciman[6] presented him with an address on behalf of the Northern Liberal Federation, which told him that 'From the Pennines to the Sea, and from the Cheviots to the Cleveland Hills the Progressives of the North are with you heart and soul, and in their name we bid you God speed.'[7] Asquith replied that he was grateful for the unfailing support of his Tyneside friends, but almost as soon as he arrived he was gone.[8]

On to Berwick-upon-Tweed which had welcomed Carson ten months earlier. Being the constituency of Sir Edward Grey there were many enthusiastic local Liberals and these turned out in some numbers to greet the Prime Minister. However, an unforeseen difficulty presented itself: Asquith's train was too long to fit into the station, and being in one of the end carriages he was stranded halfway across Berwick Bridge. A comic scene then followed with a smartly turned-out Party of local Liberals inching tentatively along the precariously narrow parapet of the bridge to present an address, while Asquith watched 'this somewhat undignified progress with a smile.'[9] At Edinburgh, a special force of 100 policemen guarded the approaches to Waverley Station nervous of the possibility of counter-demonstrations and Suffragette infiltration.[10] In the event his reception ran smoothly, as he met a Party of local dignitaries who occupied a roped-off area on the platform, beyond which thronged several hundreds of supporters.[11] This gathering so impressed Asquith that he later wrote:

> The Station was simply packed. They cheered, roared, & sang "jolly good fellow" and "Scots wha hae", and I only protected Violet [his daughter] from loud demands for a speech by asking them to sing "Auld Lang Syne" of which they proceeded to give us 2 or 3 verses, ending up with "Will you noe [sic] come home again."[12]

Across the Forth Bridge and next to Cupar, where a 'considerable crowd had gathered, expecting to hear one of his *multum in parvo* speeches', but they were disappointed: Asquith was hurriedly escorted from the station to a waiting car to avoid a menacing Party of Suffragettes that were in the area; then onwards to Ladybank, where he was to be formally adopted by his local Party. In the sky above the town there was an 'unofficial aeroplane demonstration' of six aircraft (whether for or against is unclear) which, along with the platoon of pressmen, and the Party of Japanese students who had come from Edinburgh University to see the Prime Minister, had all caused quite a stir in the sleepy

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[5] Yorkshire Herald, 4 April 1914
[6] Runciman was a native of the North East, although he represented a Yorkshire constituency.
[7] *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 4 April 1914.
[8] His train stopped at Newcastle for only eight minutes, see *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 4 April 1914
[9] *Berwick Advertiser*, 4 April 1914
[10] *Scotsman*, 4 April 1914
[11] *Edinburgh Evening News*, 4 April 1914
[12] His wife, Margot, wrote 'Such a journey!! I thought I shd [sic] have died – I've never known the Tories so vile, so rude, and so futile as now', Jenkins, *Asquith*, p. 351

Fife town.[13] Ladybank's small Masonic Hall was the venue for his speech, and it was soon entirely filled by an audience which was 'very orderly and restrained to the point of apathy.' Asquith announced that 'the Army will hear nothing of politics from me, and I will expect to hear nothing of politics from the Army', which was followed by prolonged cheers, and a voice: 'tell them to toe the line. The meeting concluded soon after, and dodging the 'militant women' Asquith departed to his billet at Kimaron Castle. On the following Sunday morning he set off back for Downing Street and was waved off by a crowd of 200 on the South Bridge at Cupar.[14]

To be sure, the Liberal press argued that that the popular effusions that greeted the Prime Minister on his journey to Scotland were impressive in scale, and, crucially in their opinion, spontaneous. This was in sharp contrast to the expert choreography of Hyde Park. 'Even after practically every elector in the metropolitan area had been personally circularised to attend [Hyde Park], and large numbers had been given free rides there', sniffed the *Daily Chronicle*, 'it was in point of fact smaller that recent Labour demonstrations held at the same place.'[15] Yet the *Times* was probably right when it claimed that Asquith's trip to Scotland 'had failed to set the green and freshly springing heather on the hills alight.'[16] As Lord Curzon once put it, Asquith hardly ever 'kindled an audience into flame'; and it was obvious from this brief insight into the Prime Minister's mini-tour that Liberal demonstrations were not as polished, nor prosecuted with as much panache, as those of the Unionists.[17] Although the Prime Minister had mustered some enthusiasm among his supporters, it paled into comparison with the contemporaneous Unionist Mardi-Gras in London and elsewhere.

The much vaunted spontaneity of pro-government demonstrations was completely overshadowed by the opposition. Liberal rallies had none of the organisational depth or support base of the Unionist versions, and the modern approach of Carson's men comes strikingly to light when we compare Asquith's amateurish progress north (the *Yorkshire Herald* thought his arrival in York was 'badly "stage managed"') with the high drama of unhorsed carriages and regiments of Orangemen staged by the Unionists.[18] The Unionists were also more accomplished at getting their message through to the media. One study of Liberalism has noted how swiftly local newspaper editors obtained from the Conservatives 'syndicated leading articles and features that provided a clear Party line on issues of the day', and it is noticeable how much more detailed and impressive press reportage of Unionist demonstrations was in comparison to their rivals.[19] On a more theatrical level the Liberals had no Smith, no Carson, no Milner and certainly no icons like Beresford - the 'hero of the Condor'. What is more, it is always easier for a political

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[13] 'Multum in parvo' means 'much in little', in other words a compression of much into little space – a summary. See *Fife Herald and Journal*, 8 April 1914
[14] *Fife Herald and Journal*, 8 April 1914
[15] *Daily Chronicle*, 6 April 1914
[16] *Times*, 6 April 1914
[17] Asa Briggs, 'The Political Scene', Simon Nowell Smith, ed., *Edwardian England, 1901-1914* (Oxford: OUP, 1964), p. 81
[18] *Yorkshire Herald*, 6 April 1914
[19] Duncan Bythell, *The Fragility of Rural Liberalism: Parliamentary Elections and Party Politics in Richmond (North Yorkshire), 1832 to 1929* (Middlesbrough: NEEHI, 2003), p. 34

Party in opposition to thump the tub. Asquith, and even the great orator Lloyd George, did their best, but they were anonymous by comparison. There was also no organisational connection between Liberalism and Irish Nationalism to compare to that between Toryism and strident Ulster Unionism which worked so profitably in 1914 – and certainly not the regiments of male and female canvassers and propagandists (many of whom were from Ireland) who spent that year traversing Britain.[20] To be sure, the Unionists still had to translate big demonstrations into big polls, but their rallies were certainly the most impressive of any of the Edwardian political movements. Therefore this chapter looks at the final acts of the Home Rule drama as it was played out in the provinces of Britain, where support for Ulster was rallied in some surprising places.

As the Home Rule question became increasingly bitter and partisan so too did press coverage, making it difficult for us to glean a common account of the period from contemporary newspapers. What we can claim with some certainty is that there was a serious political polarisation in the country at this time. The letters' pages of even the obscurest newspapers included denunciations of Carson and Law on the one hand, or, as was the case in the Tyneside-based *Shields Daily News*, a letter from 'CWNMARRU' which expressed disbelief that 'a nation of 36 millions is to be ignored on a question of which she ought to be and is mistress, and on which on two occasions 1886 and 1895, she said "No!"'[21] In April 1914, a parliamentary golf tournament at Sandwich had to be abandoned because of the ill feeling between honourable members.[22] More was to follow. In February, *Punch* included an amusing true story of the fractious atmosphere among the passengers on the Great Suburban Railway: 'on one side of the compartment ranged *The Daily Mail*, *The Daily Express* and *The Daily Telegraph*. Boldly confronting them are two *Daily Chronicles* and a *Daily News*.' Fierce disputes would regularly break out among these commuters, until one of the more neutral members of this circle proposed that a novel solution to this discord might be found by fining anyone who spoke of any politician of another Party in anything less than glowing terms: to transgress would result in a fine of 10 shillings ('with all proceeds to be divided equally between the Tariff Reform League and the Free Trade Union'). To the author's surprise and pleasure it was an immediate success

> It is a perpetual delight to see Filmer put down his *Daily Express* and with the veins bulging out from his forehead say, "That accurate and careful financier who has so immeasurably raised the status of Chancellorship of the Exchequer"; or to hear Chalmers remark, "Sad would it be if that most honey-tongued and soft-hearted of politicians, dear F. E. SMITH, should have his life ended by a British bayonet."[23]

The Ulster gun-running of late April would only intensify this dissonance.[24] A correspondent to Lady Londonderry opined that he found 'all the world agog over Ulster;

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[20] Lady Londonderry had wrote confidently to Carson in June to tell him that 'the Ulster women in England and Scotland have done really good work in electioneering', see letter from the Marchioness of Londonderry to Sir Edward Carson, 10 June 1914 PRONI, D/1507/A/6/5

[21] *Shields Daily News*, 6 April 1914

[22] *Times*, 3 April 1914

[23] *Punch*, 25 February 1914

[24] For an account of which see Stewart, *Ulster Crisis*, esp. pp. 88-105, 176-213

but everybody asking questions and nobody giving answers.'[25] Lord Selborne could foresee only deadly consequences, writing to a fellow peer that 'the division of opinion in the United Kingdom ... [is such that] we are in danger of a national catastrophe.'[26]

In his multi-volume biography of his father, Randolph Churchill commented that 'the gun-running ... had hardened public opinion against Ulster.'[27] His father - who was there at the time - was perhaps more judicious in his analysis. Churchill senior, shocked by the excesses of partisanship he had witnessed on both sides, wrote that he hoped that the Curragh 'mutiny' and the Ulster gun-running 'would have shocked British public opinion, and formed a unity sufficient to impose a settlement on the Irish factions. Apparently they had been insufficient.'[28] In a report on the UVF, three days after the gun-running at Larne, a *Times* special correspondent had written that 'Ulstermen are optimistic because they know that the government have not the sanction of public opinion for measures of the magnitude required.'[29] Indeed, in a book of press-cuttings in the James Craig Papers a passage in a *Belfast Weekly News* report has been highlighted in pen - perhaps by Craig himself - which claims that 'London has been all agog with excitement concerning the gun-running "episode" throughout the day. No incident in this prolonged struggle has fired the imagination of the people so much.'[30] Even in the remote Northumberland countryside there were a spate of pro-Ulster meetings, including a large gathering at Hexham, and a smaller one at Ovingham where Earl Percy predicted that there 'would be trouble on a large scale if anyone proposed to place the Presbyterians of England under the rule of Roman Catholics (loud applause).'[31]

One of the first opportunities to gauge the public's response to events in Ireland came at a by-election at Grimsby. The Liberals had lost the seat in the December election of 1910, and the *Times* thought an election held at such a moment would favour Mr Tickler, the Unionist candidate, as Grimsby was a stronghold of Nonconformity[32] and many of these adherents of Dissent were beginning 'to ask themselves heart-searching questions with regard to Government's attitude towards their fellow Protestants in Ulster', furthermore, there was in the docks 'a large leaven of Old Soldiers and reservists who, on different grounds, are opposed to the coercion of the Loyalist Covenanters.'[33] Perhaps as a consequence the UAI and the UDL opened an office at nearby Cleethorpes, where signatures were soon being appended to the British Covenant. It was reported that many of these signatories were fishermen and working men generally: indeed 'the entire crew

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[25] Letter from Reginald Lucas to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 21 April 1914. PRONI, D/2846/1/6/13
[26] Letter from the 2nd Earl of Selborne to Baron Charnwood, 7 February 1914, BLO, MS Selborne 77 (82)
[27] Randolph Churchill, *Winston Churchill*, 2 vols. *Young Statesman, 1901-1914* (London: Heinemann, 1967), II, p. p. 503
[28] Winston S. Churchill, *The World Crisis, 1911-1918* (London: Oldhams, 1938), p. 155
[29] *Times*, 28 April 1914
[30] Scrapbook, no page numbers (report from *Belfast Weekly News* 30 April 1914), PRONI, D/1415/A/5-8
[31] *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 28 April 1914. Partly due to the county's proximity to Scotland there were many Presbyterians in Northumberland. *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 29 April 1914. N.B. A Labour Party campaigner in Hexham told me in 2005 that his doorstep appeals in South West Northumberland are still often rejected with the comment that 'I've always voted *Unionist*.'
[32] Pelling, *Social Geography*, wrote that 'fishermen were ready converts to sects in which there was a prominent role for the layman' , p. 206
[33] *Times*, 5 May 1914

of a trawler entered the office and signed the Covenant before leaving the port this morning.'[34]

On the day of the poll there was much electioneering activity in the town. A dray-load of girls from Tickler's Grimsby factory drove round the town wearing their white working dresses embellished with Unionist colours, and one supporter was seen wearing a blue rosette, which read 'No Welsh Disestablishment.' F. E. Smith was in town, as were some speakers from Ulster, including the Rev. John Elliott who told crowds at the Pier Pavilion they "were not going to be kicked out the empire" and asked for their support.[35] Whether he got much response is unknown. For although the *Times* claimed that eventual Unionist victory was a 'mandate against coercion of Ulster' (and Carson sent a telegram bearing the message: 'Heartiest Congratulations. Ulster is grateful to Grimsby') the Unionist majority had been reduced from 638 to 278.[36] It is unclear what to make of such a result. The Unionist majority decreased by 400 but turnout was up by almost 1,500 from December 1910. This would certainly not suggest an apathetic electorate. Yet, although there was increased Covenanting activity in the town, the issue of Home Rule does not seem to stand out in the local press reports of the by-election.[37]

However the national press was paying great attention to the heightened activity of the BLSUU which had begun so strikingly at Hyde Park. At a Covenanter's meeting at Coventry 'there was a small army of Press representatives whose reports made reading matter for millions on Monday morning.'[38] Balfour and Milner were the chief speakers at a 'rousing, unmistakably good tempered and enthusiastic' meeting attended by 4,300 people at the Coventry Drill Hall, 'certainly one of the largest indoor meetings ever held in the city.' There was to have been a procession through the city but Balfour was delayed and so the plan was scrapped, so disappointing large crowds that had gathered in the city.[39] A reading of the Coventry press does not suggest indifference in the Midlands (indeed there were immediate plans to stage a counter-demonstration).[40] Nevertheless, potential apathy was a theme adumbrated in a long letter written to the *Times* on the 12 May 1914 by A. V. Dicey, concluding that Englishmen were 'wearied out with the subject of Home Rule.'[41] Yet the personal experience of Lord Milner with the British Covenant movement led him strenuously to disagree with Dicey; and his opinion was given credibility by simultaneous Unionist successes.[42]

At a by-election in Ipswich the Unionists successfully managed to place Home Rule at centre stage. Indeed, the activities of the Party on the Suffolk coast further suggests that given sustained encouragement, apathy could be successfully transformed into fervour. In the week before polling day, the town was soon alive with Liberal and Conservative

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[34] *Times*, 6 May 1914
[35] [Grimsby] *Telegraph*, 12 May 1914
[36] *Times*, 13 May 1914
[37] [Grimsby] *Telegraph*, 13 May 1914
[38] 40 press correspondents were present, see the *Coventry Graphic*, 8 May 1914
[39] *Coventry Times and Warwickshire Journal*, 6 May 1914
[40] *Midland Daily Telegraph*, 6 May 1914
[41] *Times*, 12 May 1914
[42] O'Brien, *Milner*, p. 253

processions, and the many partisans 'sang exultant choruses in the street or did their best to dominate the space before the Town Hall.' Having reported this, the *Times* also thought it notable that during the first two days of the campaign in the town 'more than 600 signatures were added to the British Covenant ... in spite of the fact that it has been possible to sign the covenant in Ipswich for some months past.'[43] The Unionist candidate, John Ganzoni,[44] tried to disassociate himself from the posters put up by the Protestant Truth Society which purported to show 'the effect of Home Rule in Ireland from the stand point of religion'.[45] Yet he may well have been pleased to note that John Kensit - a Wycliffe preacher, and son of a famous Protestant firebrand from Liverpool[46] - was in town, and calling upon the voters to reject his opponent, the High Churchman Charles Masterman, 'on the ground of his opposition to Protestant measures in Parliament.'[47]

The culmination of all this excitement came on the Saturday afternoon of Election Day when Carson and Lloyd George both arrived in the town to lend their support to the two candidates. Carson's arrival at 6pm in the evening prompted 'an orgy of Party enthusiasm', as a bodyguard of Union Jack-wielders formed up to escort his car on its journey to the Public Hall where he was due to speak. There was a veritable political carnival in the town, with 'with never a lull in the babel [sic] of invective.'[48] Enormous crowds had gathered in the town and the local paper noted that the town had not experienced anything like it for years (hawkers of blue rosettes and union jacks did a roaring trade). Furthermore, the Ulster leader had received 'one of the most demonstrative welcomes that any man has ever had in Ipswich', which very quickly became 'an absolute revival of the worst kind of 'mafficking', as gangs of noisy youths took over the town centre.[49]

Carson, accompanied by F. E. Smith, travelled at the head of a motorcade which comprised over 30 vehicles. As well as a number of local worthies, Carson was joined in his car by the famous jockey, Major Harland Bowden, who was identified by a banner which declared him to be 'the Derby winner.'[50] During his final speaking engagement of the day (he had addressed three crammed indoor audiences) Carson theatrically tore up a Liberal handbill and declared that he wanted 'peace, peace, God give us peace, all we ask is to be left alone.'[51]

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[43] *Times*, 19 May 1914

[44] 'Jack' Ganzoni was of Swiss-Italian stock, and became known as 'Union Jack' on account of his patriotic efforts in the Great War. He was ennobled in 1938 as Baron Belstead. See the obituary of his son, the 2nd Baron Belstead, *Guardian*, 6 December 2005

[45] *East Anglian Daily Times*, 19 May 1914

[46] John Kensit senior was killed in a sectarian riot at Birkenhead in 1909, see MacRaild, *Culture, Conflict and Migration*, pp. 190-192. Indeed, the iron file that felled him is still in a glass case in the Protestant Truth Society bookshop in the Strand in London.

[47] *East Anglian Daily Times*, 19 May 1914; the UWUC had been active in the town in October of 1913, Urquhart, *Minutes*, p. 84

[48] *Times*, 23 May 1914

[49] *East Anglian Daily Times*, 23 May 1914

[50] *Ipswich Evening Star*, 23 May 1914

[51] *Suffolk Chronicle and Mercury*, 23 May 1914

It is worth noting that although the Liberals had sent their star performer, Lloyd George, (whose speech at the Coliseum was full 'of Celtic humour', and had sent his audience 'into roars of laughter'), Masterman's supporters 'did not have the opportunity of making a display of the same kind in the streets.'[52] Lloyd George had driven up quietly to the auditorium. Local Liberals claimed that this was because they were concerned about possible disruption by suffragettes, and his reception 'was not so impressive as the Ulster leader's progress through the town, which was a little more out of the common.' Reports in the press bear this out

> At almost every window flags were waving as the cheering bodyguard marched along, and at the hotel the striking scene of enthusiasm continued as the crowd could see the man of honour standing at the window above them. It will be a long time before Ipswich forgets the sound of those rousing cheers and the sight of that confident body of working men fluttering their flags of red, white, and blue.[53]

Ganzoni was victorious, with the turnout at a massive 91 per cent. Carson's biographer claimed his sublject's intervention was said to be 'decisive'. Edward Saunderson claimed the result had unnerved Asquith.[54] The firmly Liberal *Daily Chronicle* did concede 'an honest defeat', but argued somewhat feebly that 'the defeat was in no degree due to Home Rule' as 'the well staged visit by [Carson] at the last moment only threw into relief the general abandonment of the Home Rule issue by the Unionist electioneers.'[55] This is hard to believe for two reasons. Firstly, the local candidate was obviously well supported by his leader who provided him with numerous telegrams and letters for publication from the platform and in the local press, and these communiqués dwelt on all the national issues, but particularly Home Rule.[56] Secondly, and this is crucial, the Unionist insider Leo Amery revealed in his diary that he went to Ulster on behalf of the British Tories in early May to meet the Ulster Unionists 'to coordinate our programmes' (nothing like this occurred between the Liberals and the Party of John Redmond).[57] What is more, fellow Tory zealots like Henry Page Croft were doing their utmost to rally support for Carson, as Nancy Croft wrote 'Henry is going off to his constituency tomorrow to preach Ulster for all he is worth.'[58] As a consequence, the activities of British League became increasingly prominent throughout May.

On 18 May large assemblage of Unionists from the Tonbridge division of Kent and beyond convened on Tunbridge Wells Common with some attendant ceremony to hear

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[52] *East Anglian Daily Times*, 23 May 1914. Interestingly, the local Party had then only recently appealed for members to offer the use of their motorcars at election time, see the 'Eastern Provincial Division of the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations, Minute Book', BLO, CPA ARE 7/1/6

[53] *East Anglian Daily Times*, 23 May 1914

[54] Colvin, *Carson*, p. 398. Saunderson had written to Lady Londonderry telling her that for the PM this meant 'that all arrangements changed ... and Ipswich did it.'

[55] *Daily Chronicle*, 25 May 1914

[56] Ganzoni wrote a grateful letter to Law that these had been 'very welcome to me personally', and that he had been 'very well supported by the Party in every way.' Letter from Mr Ganzoni to Andrew Bonar Law, 8 June 1914. HLRO, BL/32/4/5

[57] Leo Amery, *My Political Life* 2 vols *England before the Storm, 1896-1914* (London: Hutchinson, 1953), I, p. 441.

[58] Letter from Croft's wife, Nancy, to the Marchioness of Londonderry, n.d. 1914, PRONI, D/2846/1/11/11

the 'Poet of the Empire', Rudyard Kipling, express his support for the Ulstermen and contempt for the government. Conservatism in true-blue Kent was based upon the three pillars of the Church of England, the landed interest, and the licensed trade (in 1900 the Unionists trumped the Liberals in the county by fourteen MPs to one). This political hegemony was buttressed still further from the 1880s by 'hostility to Irish Home Rule' and support for the empire which emanated from four types of Kentish folk: workers in the dockyards, soldiers in the many military garrisons in the county, well-to-do suburbanites within the London commuter belt, and the 'cautious retired' in the resort towns.[59] Therefore Kent was a likely setting for Unionist effusion.

On the day before the demonstration the *Kent Courier* published an appeal for local businesses and householders to decorate their premises and homes with union jacks and bunting which was met with an impressive response, providing a gaudy backdrop to the opening procession through the town. A number of 'flying meetings' had taken place across the county to drum up support for the main event, and on the day of the rally deputations arrived in the town by special trains and charabancs from all over Kent and beyond, 'with an extraordinary number of women' being among these excursionists.[60] It was reported that nearly all of these people wore or carried a union jack (10,000 being disposed of by the Unionist central office). It was a glorious sunny day and the *Times* reported that 'a mounted escort of sturdy Kentish yeomen preceded a large procession round the town' and these men (who all carried lances) led a body of marchers over 4,000 strong.[61] A body of 150 stewards had marshalled the processionists into side streets until they were called to join the main parade which was eventually over a mile in length, with stirring martial music provided by several local bands. Tunbridge Wells rarely witnessed anything like this, and the local press reported that 'the event was organised on a scale of greater magnitude than has been attempted for many years'. Furthermore 'the assemblage had not the buoyancy than of an ordinary election crowd, but was enthusiastic in a more serious and determined manner.'[62]

Around 1,000 people had already gravitated to the park where the speaking commenced at 5 o'clock after the singing of 'O God our help in ages past.' Kipling, who was first to speak, did not mince his words. He excoriated the government, observing that as most of the members of the cabinet were not men of private means they relied upon their ministerial salaries, before concluding that 'nearly all practical and constructive crime which was not done for the sake of a woman was done for the sake of money.' He then warned the crowds that 'if these Ulster cattle could not be sold on the hoof they should be delivered as carcasses.' He reserved his highest praise for the Curragh mutineers, declaring that 'by their choice, and to their eternal glory and honour be it recorded, the army saved the empire', to noisy cheers.[63] (A few days after this outburst, Kipling received a poison-pen letter from a person styled 'the O'Donnell of O'Donnell', which

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[59] Brian Atkinson, 'Politics', Nigel Yates, ed., *Kent in the Twentieth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2001), p. 153
[60] *Kent and Sussex Courier*, 15 May 1914
[61] *Times*, 18 May 1914
[62] *Kent and Sussex Courier*, 22 May 1914
[63] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 22 May 1914

matched the poet of the empire in its vituperation: 'You contemptible lying slanderer, vomiting your foul stomach like a drunkard's spew, where you are safe from an Irish kick.')[64] Several local Unionists MPs followed Kipling, and then at the pre-emptory sound of a bugle the speechifying was halted and the resolution 'of emphatic protest against the Home Rule Bill' was put and carried, then 'salvos of cheers were given for Ulster.'[65]

II

The problem of rousing their supporters to express such fervid support for Ulster, while at the same time trying to find a way out of the political impasse, became a headache for the Unionist Party. The mooting of a federal solution in May led immediately to expressions of severe disapprobation from local Unionist parties across the country. On the 20 May 1914 Steel Maitland was inundated with resolutions 'protesting against any weakening of the Unionist opposition to the Home Rule Bill' from North Worcestershire, North Manchester, Cambridge, Loughborough, Herne Hill, Rotherhithe, North Kensington, South Islington, and Pudsey.[66] Furthermore, Walter Long told Carson that he was greatly alarmed by this movement for federalism as 'a very bad effect is being created. I find it in my collection of funds very severely and I am sure that it is doing us great harm in the constituencies.'[67]

Nevertheless, members of the BLSUU kept up their programme of demonstrations around the time that the Home Rule Bill passed the Commons once again on 25 May 1914. Lord Milner proceeding to Oxford on 21 May where he stayed with A. V. Dicey.[68] Circumstances were not wholly propitious: it was a baking hot day, the shops were open late, and it was 'eights week'. As a consequence many of the undergraduates were entertaining friends in their quarters.[69] Milner spoke at the town hall, which was filled to its 1,200 capacity, by an audience 'largely composed of women'. He was supported on the platform by many men 'eminent in the university, the town and the county', with Lord Valentia, the Unionist MP for Oxford in the Chair.[70] Five days later, at a meeting of the Surbiton branch of the BLSUU, Lord Winterton expressed his opinion that the work of the League was having a great effect upon public opinion, but he thought that it would be far better if 'forceful demonstrations' were made in 'London in the vicinity of the government offices and residences of ministers, to compel them to go to the country.' He did not suggest that they should 'imitate the tactics of certain insane women or shoot the Ministers', but he thought it imperative that they get 'tens of thousands' to 'surround the Houses of Parliament with the object of compelling the government to resign.'[71]

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[64] The Earl of Birkenhead, *Rudyard Kipling* (London: Star, 1980), p. 258
[65] *Kent Courier*, 22 May 1914
[66] Telegrams to Arthur Steel-Maitland, 20 May 1914. SRO, SMP/GD/193/163/35, 38, 41, 42, 44, 46, 49, 51
[67] Colvin, *Carson*, p. 386
[68] Letter from A. V. Dicey to Viscount Milner, 7 May 1914, BLO, MS Milner Dep 41, 120
[69] *Oxford Times*, 22 May 1914
[70] *Times*, 22 May 1914
[71] *Morning Post*, 27 May 1914

The Covenanters' immediate objective was to gather tens of thousands in the provinces. As such they took their campaign to unexpected parts of the country. The next major meeting of the League took place in South Wales, a radical region of a country hardly known for its Conservative inclinations. Nevertheless, although Edwardian Wales had a radical reputation, matters were often more complicated, not least by sectarianism. There had been large scale Irish migration to Wales in the nineteenth century, and there were a number of anti-Hibernian clashes in South Wales in the later Victorian period, not least at Tredegar in 1882 when a major riot was sparked by the murders of the Chief Secretary and Under Secretary for Ireland at Phoenix Park in Dublin.[72] By and large, however, Irish migrants in Wales were not greeted with as much hostility as in many other parts of the United Kingdom, and it has been noted that 'the 'Orange card' was so rarely and ineffectually played in Wales.'[73] Yet religion did have an important place in Welsh life and in the twentieth century, following the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in the principality, many Welsh nonconformists directed their fire toward the burgeoning Catholic Church. The proposal to grant state support to Catholic schools was met by an orchestrated 'Welsh revolt' (with the emotional rallying cry of 'Rome on the rates') and 29 local authorities in Wales refused to comply with the Liberal government's proposals.[74] Indeed, one historian has written that 'anti-Catholicism was just as fervid in twentieth century Wales as it had been in nineteenth century England'[75] – a religious feeling that may have translated into sympathy for the Ulstermen.

Yet the overwhelmingly Liberal political culture of Wales still made Unionist penetration unlikely. Consequently, then, the BLSUU may well have thought that in this case Milner's pedestrian oratory would not have fitted the bill, and so it was Carson who was scheduled to make his speaking debut in the valleys - at a meeting which *The Covenanter* magazine described as 'a vast gathering of the miners of Glamorgan.'[76] The venue was in the town of Mountain Ash.[77] Special trains were chartered on the Great Western, the Taff Vale and the Rhymney Railways bringing demonstrators from Glamorganshire and West Monmouthshire. Some even came from Cardigan and Carmarthen. Processions were formed at Penrhiwceiber and the station at Mountain Ash, and, with bands playing and amid scenes of great animation, they proceeded to the Great Pavilion where 'Sir Edward

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[72] Alan O'Day, 'Varieties of anti-Irish behaviour in Britain, 1846-1922', Panikos Panayi, ed., *Racial Violence in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1996), p. 35

[73] Paul O'Leary, *Immigration and Integration: The Irish in Wales, 1798-1922* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 2000), p. 310

[74] Kenneth O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics, 1868-1922* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1980), pp. 181-198

[75] Trystan Owain Hughes, 'Anti-Catholicism in Wales, 1900-1960', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 53:2 (2002), p. 316. The Ku Klux Klan even established a presence in the Valleys between the wars, p. 324

[76] *The Covenanter*, 20 May 1914

[77] Mountain Ash was the birthplace of one Matthew Keating who was elected Irish Nationalist MP for South Kilkenny in 1910, and venue for a large Unionist demonstration in 1920 held to protest against state-ownership of the mines in 1920), see O'Leary, *Immigration and Integration*, p. 277, and M. J. Benbough-Jackson, '"A stormy petrel in the Glamorganshire valleys": John Littlejohns (1862-1942)', *Welsh History Review*, 21:3 (2003), p. 520

Carson was received with intense enthusiasm.'[78] The Cardiff based *Western Mail* noted that 'few meetings [have been] more vast and enthusiastic than the gathering which confronted him at the Pavilion'; furthermore, 'knowing that Wales is regarded as the very marrow of Radicalism he must have been agreeably impressed.'[79] The staunchly radical *South Wales Daily News* conceded that there were at least 10,000 present, though they made great play of the 'lack of harmony' occasioned by the persistent hecklers (who were eventually man-handled from the Pavilion).[80]

Carson had made a brief speech at Pontypool Station on his way to the rally. When he arrived at the pavilion he was 'besieged in the ante-room before the meeting by those who wished to shake his hand.'[81] Waiting for him in the hanger-like building (lit by electric arc-lamps) was an audience of 12,000, which had been marshalled by a hand-picked squad of policemen from Pontypridd. Inside the hall the audience were entertained by the Ton Petre male-voice choir, before the local peer Lord Dynevor introduced Carson to tumultuous cheers. Carson told his Welsh audience that Ulster had been 'jeered at for having wooden rifles', but once the Mausers were unloaded at Larne the atmosphere had changed. 'I know that was a breach of the law', he admitted, 'but they have not dared to punish us for it ... they know perfectly well that they cannot put Ulster down and they are not going to try and do it.'[82]

The *Glamorgan County Times* was obviously sympathetic to the Unionist campaign; indeed, the organising committee for the demonstration was based in the paper's offices in Pontypridd. The organ even included a flamboyantly written report from a local clergyman - the Reverend Lemuel Hopkin James, vicar of Ystradmynach, a 'Welsh nationalist to the marrow' - who recorded his first impression of Carson after meeting the Unionist leader at the home of Colonel Morgan Lyndsay:

> Lemuel like Zacchaeus is small in stature and had to look up to the uncrowned king of Ulster ... a veritable Saul among his fellows ... an inner voice whispered "Lemuel you are in the presence of a great man." These Ulster men with the well known brogue are not English, [his was] not the voice of the cold blooded anti-Celt.[83]

Despite being an Anglican vicar, the Reverend may well have spoken for his dissenting countrymen, who were more than likely well disposed towards their co-religionists in Northern Ireland. It should not be forgotten that there was an undoubted hostility to Roman Catholicism among Welsh chapel-goers which also seemed to dovetail with antagonism toward the Church of England. Noting the presence of many Anglican clergy at the meeting, the *Free Press* remarked that although these men profess hostility to Catholic ascendancy in Ireland 'they are in a 'very subtle form a greater feeder of the Roman Communion, and they are also to the fore, in this country of ours, in putting

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[78] *Glamorgan County Times*, 29 May 1914
[79] *Western Mail*, 29 May 1914
[80] *South Wales Daily News*, 29 May 1914
[81] *Glamorgan County Times*, 5 June 1914
[82] *Western Mail*, 29 May 1914
[83] *Glamorgan County Times*, 5 June 1914

Catholic teachers, and Catholic teaching and traditions on the rates.'[84] Indeed, in 1912, over 40,000 had gathered in Swansea to demonstrate in favour of Welsh Disestablishment, which trumped the 10,000 or so who convened in Caernarfon, in the presence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, to protest against the Bill.[85] In many respects the contentious presence of the established Anglican Church in Wales served to obscure anti-Catholic sentiment in the Principality. Because the dominant reformed Protestants of Wales so lamented the prevalence of ritualism within the established Church, the 'No Popery' cry could be levelled by Welsh Dissenters at the Church of England as much as the Church of Rome.[86]

After the meeting the *County Times* was moved to editorialise (more perhaps in hope than expectation) that 'change is coming over the political complexion of the southern part of the principality', as the 'greater part of the audience was made up of Unionist working men ... what a revelation of progress in the mining valleys of South Wales.'[87] This progress was built on with a series of meetings throughout June.[88] But claims for a hardening of Unionism in Wales are a moot point. The more hostile *Glamorgan Free Press*, (under the headline 'CARSONISM') had to concede that 'the Mountain Ash meeting was in every sense, a magnificent meeting.' However they thought that although there was patriotism in abundance 'it was an ill-starred patriotism, and the enthusiasm rather calculated to stir the exigencies of a defeated cause.'[89] This may well have been true, and there were some glimmers of hope for Welsh Unionism. The broader Conservative cause in Wales still suffered seriously from its perceived Englishness and social exclusivity; and in an interesting remark a Welsh Liberal politician, Sir A. S. T. Griffith Boscawen, thought that the Tories were poor organisers. 'They have tremendous demonstrations and deliver magnificent speeches', he wrote, but then 'nothing more happens until the next demonstration.'[90] To be sure, Wales remained overwhelmingly a Conservative desert throughout this period (returning no MPs in 1906) - yet Edwardian politics were often unpredictable. It is revealing that after the famous riots at Llanelli, a Liberal had been returned at a subsequent by-election - *but* 'the Tory vote had reached its highest point in 25 years.'[91] Furthermore, the Unionist MP Oliver Locker Lampson writing in a letter to Bonar Law, expressed a view that 'everything ought to be done to encourage Conservatism in South Wales whose enthusiasm is most remarkable and who

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[84] *Glamorgan Free Press*, 4 June 1914

[85] Neil Evans, ''A Nation in a Nutshell': The Swansea Disestablishment Demonstration of 1912 and the Political Culture of Edwardian Wales', R. R. Davies and Geraint H. Jenkins, *From Medieval to Modern Wales: Historical Essays in Honour of Kenneth O. Morgan and Ralph A. Griffiths* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), pp. 219-226

[86] Paul O'Leary, 'A Tolerant Nation? Anti-Catholicism in Nineteenth Century Wales', R. R. Davies and Geraint H. Jenkins, *From Medieval to Modern Wales: Historical Essays in Honour of Kenneth O. Morgan and Ralph A. Griffiths* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), p. 211

[87] *Glamorgan County Times*, 5 June 1914

[88] *Glamorgan County Times*, 26 June 1914

[89] *Glamorgan Free Press*, 4 June 1914

[90] Felix Aubel, 'The Conservatives in Wales, 1880-1935', Martin Francis and Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, eds, *The Conservatives and British Society, 1880-1990* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996), pp. 106, 103; Benbough-Jackson also makes the point that 'mass meetings were the second tributary into this hoped for Conservative stream that would flow through the valleys, see 'A Stormy Petrel', p. 520

[91] Bentley, *Politics without Democracy*, p. 259

rather feel that they have been left in the cold latterly.'[92] Carson may have warmed them up, and the *Times* certainly thought that his arrival had given 'rise to a remarkable display of public interest and enthusiasm.'[93]

These British League rallies were now being staged at the rate of one a week. At the Somerset County Ice Rink in Bath, a politically marginal town,[94] Lord Selborne was the chief speaker to an audience of over 3,000 gathered to protest against 'the use of British forces to shoot Ulster loyalists for political purposes.' A full programme of patriotic music was provided, including 'the Veteran's song', 'Sons of the Motherland', and 'Land of Hope and Glory.' After an hour of speeches, the chair helpfully suggested that the audience 'should go home and rub in what they had heard to their Liberal friends.'[95] Viscount Milner then picked up the Covenanting baton with a speech in a massive marquee at the small town of Rothwell in Northamptonshire. Thanks to the radical traditions of the low-paying, sweated boot and shoe industry the borough of Northampton was Liberal but the town's rural hinterland was more Tory.[96] 'What price little Rothwell now?' asked the Conservative *Northampton Herald*, 'practically every town and village in [Mid Northamptonshire] was represented.'[97] (Even the Liberal *Mercury* conceded that there was 'a very large audience.')[98] In fact there were probably around 2,500 in Milner's big tent 'practically all of whom carried a flaglet [sic] or wore an Ulster badge', after a lusty rendition of 'Hearts of Oak' cheers were given for an absent Sir Edward Carson, before Milner denounced the perfidy of the Liberal government.

Yet personal appearances from Carson were not the only means of persuading the British public of the strength of Ulster's cause. About this time the *Times* was warning the UVF that armed confrontation would be self-defeating: their 'best hope lies in making the people of England and Scotland understand the strength of Ulster's case.'[99] The *Times* also pressed the Ulster Unionists to step up their programme of supervised tours of the province for interested parties from the mainland. One of the main instigators of this had been Lord Selborne and he set up an account in Parr's bank in Warrington to finance the project, enlisting the help of Harold Smith the Unionist MP for the town and the local Unionist agent, Herbert Hayes.[100] After their first tour Hayes reported some initial

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[92] Letter from Oliver Locker Lampson to Andrew Bonar Law, 29 April 1914. HLRO, BL/32/2/66. We have already met Lampson, he was the MP who had started to raise volunteers in Huntingdonshire to fight for Ulster.

[93] *Times*, 29 May 1914

[94] Pelling, *Social Geography*, p. 147. It is interesting to note that there was some marked anti-Catholic behaviour in the town at the time of the restoration of the Hierarchy in 1851, see Wallis, 'Anti-Catholicism', p. 8

[95] *Bath Chronicle*, 30 May 1914

[96] Pelling, *Social Geography*, pp. 110, 121

[97] *Northampton Herald*, 5 June 1914

[98] *Northampton Mercury*, 5 June 1914

[99] *Times*, 3 June 1914

[100] The creation of the account is discussed in a letter to Harold Smith from Louis Voisey, a Warrington accountant, 5 May 1914, BLO MS Selborne 78 (5); Selborne's largesse was matched by the East Anglian Unionist MP W. H. Smith who also offered to meet the expenses of a deputation to Ireland, see Minutes of Executive Council, 11 July 1914, in 'Eastern Provincial Division of the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations, Minute Book' BLO, CPA ARE 7/1/6

teething problems, informing Selborne that some of the Liberals on these Irish tours had been wearingly truculent; and they were regularly intercepted by Nationalists who would impress on them what a blessing Home Rule would be. What is more, some were unhappy with the levels of compensation paid to them in lieu of missed wages, and the agent from Warrington wrote that they must try and recruit 'working men radicals ... that was our intention when fixing £2 as wages to be paid for loss of time.'[101]

These problems with personnel were evidently soon resolved. A leader of one of these deputations, a Mr England, wrote to Harold Smith telling him that 'practically all' of a Party of 47 comprised of eleven Unionists and 36 'Liberals and Socialists' (several of whom had been hand picked by the Liberal Party as they were believed to be 'men who could not possibly change their views') returned from Ireland convinced Unionists.[102] And in July, Hayes would inform Selborne that a Party made up of six men each from Cheltenham, Chippenham, Torquay, Jarrow, Maidstone, Warrington, and South Bedfordshire was 'by far the most successful we have had up to the present' and that 'a very strong radical from Warrington [who] was biased at the start has been converted.'[103]

Deputations from the length and breadth of the country visited Ulster throughout 1914 up until the end of July, and the UUC itself noted that 'many of these gentlemen converted to Unionism' as once-convinced Home Rulers had their convictions shaken and upset. 'Liberals and Labour men who believed the stories or unreasoning Protestant bigotry now write of the "stifling, throttling dominance of Roman Catholicism."'[104] A letter from Ireland to Carson's personal secretary Pembroke Wicks echoed these claims

> As you know we have had a very large number of tours, consisting largely of radicals from a great many constituencies in England and Scotland who have been going round Ireland and studying Irish conditions. The results have been extremely good.[105]

These deputations had been reported with relish in the Ulster press throughout 1914. Under the headline HOME RULERS CONVERTED the *Belfast Telegraph* had reported in January that a Party from Warrington subsequently published a statement which affirmed that

> In every town visited where the nationalists have control the rates were high and the condition unsatisfactory. The slums in Dublin are the worst we have seen in any part

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[101] Letter from Herbert Hayes to the Earl of Selborne, n.d. May 1914. BLO, MS Selborne 78 (19-20); and letter from Hayes to Selborne, 13 June 1914. BLO, MS Selborne 78 (33-34)

[102] Letter from Mr England to Harold Smith, leader of deputation to Ireland, 24 June 1914, BLO, CPA MS Selborne 78 (52)

[103] Report of Deputation No. 4 (July) 1914, from Herbert Hayes BLO, CPA MS Selborne 78 (79-80)

[104] *Times*, 3 June 1914. In May and June deputations to Ireland came from: Glasgow, Kilmarnock, Berwickshire, Roxburghshire, Ayrshire, Manchester, Darlington, Stockton on Tees, Northwich, Lincoln, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Loughborough, Kidderminster, Staffordshire, Pembroke Dock, Bedford, Exeter, Wiltshire, and Banbury. See also *The Ulster Unionist Council and Ulster Union of Constitutional Associations Year Book ... 1914* (Belfast 1914), p. 56. PRONI, (Smythe Papers) D/972/17

[105] Letter from an unknown correspondent to Pembroke Wicks, 15 June 1914 PRONI, D/989/A/8/2/19/34

of the United Kingdom, and the filth in the streets is a general menace to the community. [Furthermore, the paper went on,] in the interests of humanity, good government, democracy, and imperial safety alike, it is urgently necessary that the statesmen of the United Kingdom should devise some means to obviate the tragedy which is at present hanging like a black cloud over the country, and that to force the present measure into law would not only be a blunder but a crime.[106]

Likewise the experiences of a Party of eight Liberal and six Unionist working men from Loughborough were published in leaflet form by the UUC. After a tour that took in Belfast, Enniskillen, Sligo and Dublin, and with some inevitability, these fourteen men signed a testimonial that declared that 'the subject of Home Rule is of great national importance, and if enforced in its present form would be a grave injustice to Ulster.'[107]

This inevitably made an impression back in England, as the whole project was of course designed to. The *Chester Courant* pointed out that the 'politically mixed deputation which recently went over to Ireland from Warrington came back of one mind.'[108] And in June the *Manchester Courier* was to make similar copy over a Party from Exeter, Stafford, and Stockton who returned from Ireland and admitted that 'our views have undergone a considerable change.'[109] What is more, these men inevitably began to tell their colleagues of their – often very colourful – experiences. Mr England wrote an amusing letter to Harold Smith telling him of his experiences in the West of Ireland where 'Mr Wheatly a very gentlemanly looking individual from West Bromwich' went into a barber shop and asked for a shave only to be refused by the barber on account of him being English; or Mr Price of Bodmin who was refused cigarettes by a Connacht tobacconist for the same reason. 'They were both naturally astonished' wrote England, '[and] of course this sort of treatment is very edifying. I could write a book on our experiences.'[110]

In Devon, the Unionist Agent wrote that of a local Party that went to Ireland several 'are now working for us against Home Rule' including an ex-socialist who 'is the chief guard at the tramway depot', and an ex-Liberal William Rudall, who 'now writes letters to the papers against Home Rule.'[111] Likewise, his counterpart in Bedford recorded that these tourists were now 'proving admirable missionaries, and causing little less than consternation at the Liberal club.' As was often the case with anti-Home Rule demonstrations, the agent opined that '[n]othing of a political character has aroused so much interest in the borough for a long time.'[112] Of a contingent of sceptics from West

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[106] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 20 January 1914
[107] *Loughborough Working Men's Report on Visit to Ireland.* PRONI, D/989/C/1/20
[108] *Chester Courant*, 28 January 1914
[109] *Manchester Courier*, 2 June 1914
[110] Letter from Mr England to Harold Smith, 24 June 1914 BLO, CPA MS Selborne 78 (53)
[111] Letter from B. M. Thornton, Unionist Agent for the Exeter Division, to H. E. Duke, 22 June 1914, MS Selborne 78 (86)
[112] Letter from P. J. Richardson to Gerald Hargreaves, 7 July 1914, BLO, MS Selborne 78 (87)

Yorkshire, Harold Smith wrote simply that '[t]he Huddersfield report is really wonderful ... I knew some of the men and thought them unmoveable'.[113]

All this naturally caught some in the Liberal Party somewhat flat-footed. Harold Smith crowed that the success of the scheme had caused the Liberal *Warrington Examiner* to become 'very silent'.[114] Furthermore, after returning from an Irish tour, the vice-president of the Olney Liberal Club in Buckinghamshire, a Mr Hinde, changed his views on Home Rule. Yet he was so disgusted with his treatment at the hands of his erstwhile Liberal colleagues that he crossed over to the Unionists and 'gave a talk at the Newport Pagnell Conservative Working Men's Club on his experiences'.[115] And George Bradfield from Cheltenham, a former Liberal, wrote to the *Gloucestershire Echo* that although 'general ignorance prevails on the Irish question' but he had no confidence left in the government, thundering that 'there is still a remnant left who will not bow the knee to Baal.'[116]

Of course, aspersions were cast upon the impartiality of these men, and one historian has noted that while the radical and nationalist press scoffed that these '"workmen were described as Liberals ... [but they were] ... picked by Tory foremen."' Yet the story of one Thomas Parr, a Liberal from Stafford who returned from Ireland with his Home Rule opinions unchanged, 'might suggest that this scorn was misplaced.'[117] What is more, this programme of 'inviting deputations consisting largely of fair-minded and unbiased Radical and Labour Home Rulers' (as the UUC called them), was nothing if not thorough, and indeed in 1914 it was extended so that by August of that year 1,250 representatives from 116 British constituencies had crossed the Irish Sea.[118]

Such activity was dependent upon press coverage, and the UUC was pleased to note that between 1913 and 1914 'practically every important London and provincial newspaper [had] sent over a representative or representatives.'[119] Yet the Ulster campaign was often dismissed by incredulous editors who did not believe their own reporters. When the young journalist Philip Gibbs filed an excited report from Belfast in 1912 in which he wrote of the arming of Ulster and the grim determination of the Ulster volunteers, his editor at the *Daily Chronicle* drew a line through his copy and annotated it with the withering remark 'Gibbs has had his leg pulled.'[120] In most cases though it seems that the Ulstermen were stymied simply by their inability to maintain Fleet Street's interest, and the deputations from Britain were a case in point. The Manchester Tory Percy Woodhouse reported to Lord Derby that he had 'wanted to make a big splash' over a Party from Manchester that had visited Ulster in May. 'I ... could have got it all over the

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[113] Letter from Harold Smith MP to the 2nd Earl Earl of Selborne, 18 July 1914, BLO, MS Selborne 78 (113)
[114] Letter to Harold Smith from Mr England, leader of deputation to Ireland, 24 June 1914, BLO, MS Selborne 78 (52)
[115] Letter from Herbert Hayes to Harold Smith MP, 21 July 1914, MS Selborne Dep 78 (117)
[116] *Gloucestershire Echo*, 20 July 1914
[117] Buckland, *Irish Unionism*, p. 82
[118] *The Ulster Unionist Council and Ulster Union of Constitutional Associations Year Book ... 1915* (Belfast 1915), p. 59. PRONI, (Smythe Papers) D/972/19
[119] *Ulster Unionist Council Year Book ... 1914*, p. 56
[120] Phillip Gibbs, *The Pageant of the Years* (London: Heinemann, 1946), p. 130

London papers to quote it and mention it and say what an effect it would have [as the] great thing is to impress not the Irish public with what the English people think but the English public.' However, the story had already been telegraphed to the Irish newspapers, thus becoming in his phrase 'stale news' which served to turn off the London press.[121]

The spring and summer of 1914 was the only period when the London press seemed to take a serious, sustained interest in Ulster. On 28 March the poet Wilfred Scawen Blunt noted in his diary that the English press were 'getting worked up' over Ulster.[122] And the Earl of Crawford wrote wryly on 10 July 1914 that 'Lord Northcliffe is very proud of having just discovered the Ulster problem. He is just returned from a grand tour of inspection, having taken en suite half the staff of the *Times* and apparently everybody connected with the *Daily Mail*.'[123] This tardiness may well be explained by the fact that, for all his Dublin roots, Northcliffe had been apparently 'bored and irritated' by the Irish question.[124] In April he had written to Churchill to express his disapproval of his 'outrageous threatenings' [sic] against Ulster Protestants, as well as his belief that the Southern Irish did not really want Home Rule, and, as a consequence, Churchill is 'completely out of touch with the real views of the English, as well as the Irish peoples.'[125] But by June this exuberant pressman had experienced a change of heart and arrived in Ulster 'at the head of a massive retinue of reporters, spending thousands of pounds on cars, motor-boats, and cashes of petrol, and a permanent team of at least 10 reporters.'[126] Conversely, there is some evidence that the Liberal press were doing their best to pour cold water on the Ulster campaign. The staunch Unionist Ronald McNeill worried that

> Radical newspapers in England believed—or at any rate tried to make their readers believe—that the "Northcliffe Press", particularly *The Times* and *Daily Mail*, gave an exaggerated account of these extraordinary demonstrations of welcome to Carson, and of the impressiveness of the great meetings which he addressed.[127]

Writing to James Craig in 1915, Lord Selborne recalled how Craig had told him that a correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* had intimated that this year in Belfast 'he had been left free to report what he saw and heard but that last year [1914] he had "written to order."'[128]

For all that, it seems that most Unionist-leaning titles in the capital were, by this time, firmly supportive of Carson and the UVF. Walter Long wrote to Carson to tell him that it

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[121] Letter from Percy Woodhouse to the Earl of Derby, 13 May 1914. LRO, 920 DER (17) 17/1

[122] Wilfred Scawen Blunt, *My Diaries: Being a Personal Narrative of Events, 1888-1914* (London: Martin Secker, 1919), p. 837

[123] Vincent, ed., *Crawford Papers*, p. 188

[124] Reginald Pound and Geoffrey Harmsworth, *Northcliffe* (London: Cassell, 1959), p. 456

[125] Letter from Viscount Northcliffe to Winston Churchill, 1 April 1914. CCC, CHAR 28/117/127

[126] One of his team was even sent to Glasgow to hire a tug (for £80 a week) should hostilities break out and the Post Office cables were cut. Paul Ferris, *The House of Northcliffe* (New York: World, 1972), p. 192

[127] McNeill, *Ulster's Stand*, p. 225

[128] Selborne asked whether he could quote this in the House of Lords, see letter from the 2nd Earl of Selborne to James Craig, 5 July 1915. PRONI, T/3775/25/7

had been agreed at a meeting of Fleet Street editors of all that if the Ulstermen had to take drastic action then 'they would support you whatever you did. As one of [the editors] said ... "we have absolute confidence in him and shall back him for all we are worth."'[129] In his scathing attack on Carson and the 'Ulster Movement' the Belfast-born author St. John Ervine recalled 'asking the editor of a Conservative newspaper why his journal was so devoted to the Orangemen, and he informed me that his interest was due to the fact that all the rich people were on the side of the Orangemen, whom he personally disliked.'[130] However, one historian has argued that whatever position any of the other Unionist newspapers had taken by 1914, it was the *Times* that had 'most assuredly played an important role in rallying middle-class English opinion, which before 1912 had seemed apathetic to Irish affairs', thereby effectively sustaining 'the sixteenth century mentality of the opposing factions in the Home Rule crisis.'[131] Indeed, in May 1914, a worried Asquith contacted Northcliffe and urged him that the *Times* should be more 'responsible'.[132]

The sixteenth and seventeenth century mentality of certain parts of Scotland required little encouragement from Printing House Square. In Glasgow, the *Times* noted that 'her citizens make no secret of their fear that should an outbreak occur on the other side of St George's channel grave trouble may follow within their own gates.'[133] The point was revealed in a letter Milner wrote to Bonar Law in May, where he remarked that 'it is significant that the "Covenant" has had proportionately more success - judged by the number of signatures - in Scotland than in England'. As a consequence he and his colleagues in the BLSUU had convened meetings in Glasgow and Inverness, which he asked Law to make a speech, concluding that there are 'very good hopes of a big turn out in that part of Scotland.'[134] Accordingly, Law travelled north to Inverness where he spoke on 12 June. Lord Lovat – a notable Catholic - presided over the gathering at 'MacRae & Sons' Garage' at Gordonville outside Inverness. Entertained by the Inverness Unionist Choir, an audience of around 6,000 was present - many of whom had come by yacht and other craft from remote parts of the Highlands and Islands (including the Shetlands). In his opening remarks Lovat commended those Unionist stalwarts who had undergone 'a week's travelling on their part.'[135] Law was introduced with a rendition of 'Hail to the Chief', and following Lovat, who had talked about his own Roman Catholicism (and the presence of many Catholics in the audience), Law announced that he supported Ulster not 'because they were Protestants, as I am, but because their claims were justified'. Yet there was more than a hint of Orange in his peroration. Speaking of the Ulstermen, he

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[129] Colvin, *Carson*, p. 353

[130] St. John Greer Ervine, *Sir Edward Carson and the Ulster Movement* (Dublin: Maunsell, 1915), p. 72

[131] Thomas Kennedy, 'Hereditary enemies: Home Rule, Unionism and the *Times*', *Journalism History*, 27:1 (2001), pp. 40-41

[132] Pound and Harmsworth, *Northcliffe*, p. 457

[133] *Times*, 13 June 1914

[134] Letter from Lord Milner to Andrew Bonar Law, 5 May 1914. HLRO, BL/32/3/26. The popularity of the Covenant in Scotland has been corroborated elsewhere, see Steve Bruce, 'The Ulster Connection', in Graham Walker and Tom Gallagher, eds, *Sermons and Battle Hymns: Protestant Popular culture in Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), p. 237

[135] *Belfast Telegraph*, 12 June 1914

skilfully spoke to the folk memories of his Scottish audience familiar with the story of the Apprentice Boys

> They are moved by the same spirit which animated the men who behind the walls of Derry upheld the credit of their race and the honour of our country (cheers) as you remember their enemies erected a boom across the river to close them in. A British ship broke that boom. The government now by their Parliament Act have erected another boom intended to shut them off from the help of the British people. I appeal to you, to the people of Scotland, and to the people of England once more to break that boom (Loud cheers).[136]

At about this time the Unionists convened a number of meetings in North East England. The professionalism of Unionist organisation of large rallies is suggested by a report which appeared in the *Newcastle Journal* in May which noted that Mr Engelbach who organised the stewards at the Great Unionist demonstration at Wallsend will also take command at a forthcoming meeting at the Tyne Theatre in Newcastle.[137] F. E. Smith was the star attraction and he arrived first in strategically important Sunderland where he addressed 2,000 people in the Victoria Hall.[138] '"Was it not worthwhile to consider"', asked Smith, '"whether they in Sunderland would agree tomorrow to be placed under a Roman Catholic parliament in which they would be a minority?"' This was met with cheers and jeers - which annoyed a testy Smith - with one woman shouting 'you incite people to disorder', upon which several members of the audience loudly expressed the wish that the young lady, who was apparently a Nationalist, 'should be "hoyed out", although there were others who wished her to stay.'[139] His engagements at Newcastle were just as boisterous. The Tyne and Pavilion Theatres had been booked to provide accommodation for over 5,000 persons and the two meetings commenced simultaneously at 3pm on Saturday 6 June, with A. L. Horner (the MP for South Tyrone) and Smith alternating between the two venues which were across the road from each other.[140] The doors of the Tyne theatre were opened an hour before the time appointed for speeches and the stage was first occupied by 'an interesting exhibition by Mr Albert Coulter (a well-known Belfast merchant) of 100 lantern slides depicting Irish events.' While in the Pavilion theatre a 3,000ft film of the Ulster Volunteers manoeuvring was shown on the 'bioscope', while the orchestra 'beguiled the audience with patriotic music.'[141]

Viscount Ridley, who presided, told the audience that, as a former soldier, he had enlisted '"to fight the King's enemies, and I think I know who the King's enemies are now"

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[136] *Inverness Courier*, 12 June 1914

[137] *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 18 May 1914

[138] Tory high command obviously thought the town to be sympathetic to the Unionists, and thought that they should send a big hitter to Wearside. 'Curzon says he cannot manage these distant meetings. They are beyond his strength. I think someone ought to go to Sunderland. It really is a very important place and a likely win.' Letter from Arthur Steel Maitland to Andrew Bonar Law, 22 January 1914. HLRO, BL/31/2/53

[139] *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 6 June 1914

[140] The two houses were 'packed to overflowing' see *Almwick and Northumberland County Gazette*, 13 June 1914

[141] [Newcastle] *Evening Mail*, 6 June 1914

(Here, here and cheers).' Earl Percy followed, and a bitter monologue about Lloyd George 'staying at Marienbad or Monte Carlo ... while smoking cigars and denouncing the rich' was cut short by 'loud hisses from the upper circle and a voice cried "Ring off [sic] Percy."' Smith, responding to cries of 'Play up Liverpool', seemed to save the situation (although when he mentioned the Chancellor of the Exchequer a voice said 'you'll never be the man that Lloyd George is"', which caused considerable commotion as 'another voice shouted "fetch Carson."') 'F. E.' spoke for 55 minutes and reminded the assembled Tynesiders that '"Ulster is the only part of Ireland that you can sing 'God Save the King' without getting your head broken", before warning that '"Ministers who try and use the army will end up swinging from the lamp-posts of London"' – upon which a voice from the pit shouted defiantly '"Ulster will fight."'[142]

Further down the coast at Hull, Lords Selborne and Milner addressed crowds of between 10,000 and 15,000 which had been convened by the 'Hull and East Riding Protest Committee' to 'protest against British forces being used to shoot Ulster Loyalists.'[143] Hull was in many respects a mini Liverpool. With a working-class based around the ill-organised, unskilled labour of the docks and chemicals works, radical and labour politics struggled to gain a foothold. One of Hull's most prominent local politicians was the Unionist, Seymour King. He was a London banker, who knew how to win the working-class vote by 'talking vaguely of 'social reform', denouncing the 'immigration of foreign paupers', and regularly showing off his largesse by giving out free coal and paying for 'dustmen's treats'.[144] Furthermore, the city had a large Catholic population (around 20,000 in 1904), and the issue of denominational education in particular had led to the occasional outburst of anti-Catholicism.[145] The combination of such factors often played well for the Tories, and Selborne and Milner were to be impressed with local Unionist strength. Five processions of men and women, headed by bands, and carrying banners and flags, walked from different points in the three Hull constituencies to the rallying ground in the Corporation field, where they were led by a dozen marshals and the West Hull Excelsior Band.

Proceedings were commenced with the singing of 'O God' after which speeches were given from three platforms for exactly an hour before the sound of bugles brought the crowds to attention so that a resolution could be put, whereupon, as advertised in the programme 'those in support will at once raise their right hand.'[146] The staunchly Tory *Hull Daily Mail* reported the event with no little enthusiasm. 'The Corporation field ... presented a scene the like of which probably never had been seen before in the city.' They were excited too by the sight of Catholics and Protestants mingled together in the 'uncomfortably thick' crowd, but, they claimed, 'sectarianism was a secondary consideration in a universally important matter as this', where most removed their hats to sing the National Anthem.[147] Typically, their Liberal rival poured scorn on the

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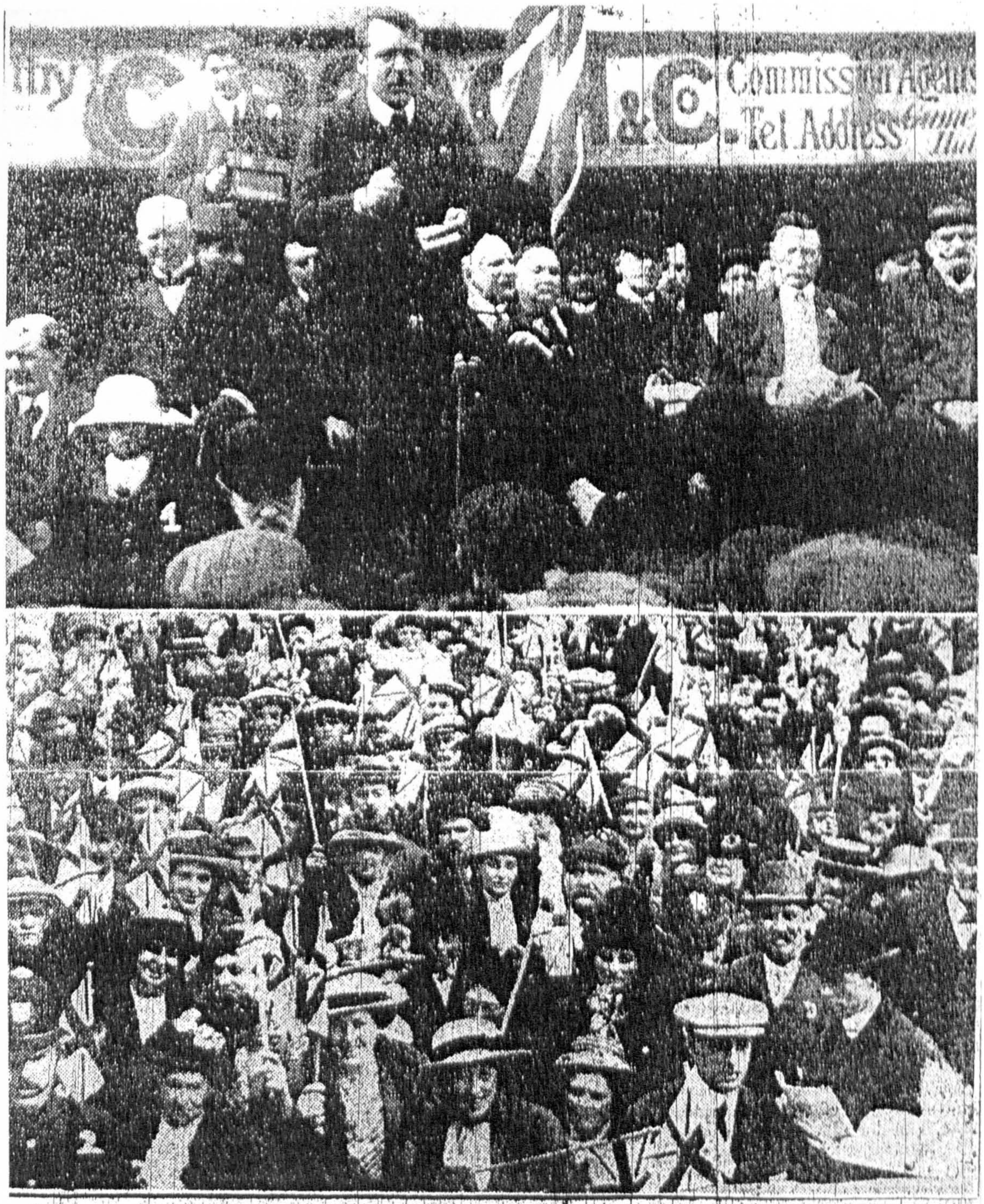
[142] *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 8 June 1914
[143] Invitation and programme for the 'Hull and East Riding Protest', BLO, MS Milner Dep 41, 123-25
[144] Pelling, *Social Geography*, p. 296-7
[145] Maria G. McClelland, *The Sisters of Mercy: Popular Politics and the Growth of the Roman catholic Community in Hull, 1855-1930* (Edwin Mellen: Lewiston, NY, 2000), pp. 109, 163-65
[146] *Eastern Morning News*, 8 June 1914
[147] *Hull Daily Mail*, 8 June 1914



—*Photo by W. Watson and "Mail" photos.*

HULL COVENANTERS' PROTEST MEETING.

PHOTOS AT THE HUGE PROTEST MEETING IN THE CORPORATION FIELD ON SATURDAY LAST.

No. 1.—SIR MARK SYKES, M.P., draws a crowd like a magnet.
No. 2.—WEST HULL STAND SNAPSHOT, showing the great display of Union Jacks.
No. 3.—VISCOUNT MILNER SPEAKING, East Hull Stand.

14. A 'Tory Lourdes'? *Hull Daily Mail*, 8 June 1914

proceedings. Under the Headline 'A TORY LOURDES', the *Daily News* ridiculed the 'perspiring pilgrims', and thought the processions 'a miserable fiasco.' In a bitterly sarcastic editorial it admitted that the arrangements included 'plenty of theatricals', but 'what has it effected? Nothing! The thunderbolts fell flat!'[148]

There were more theatricals at Eastbourne that same weekend, where the Duke of Devonshire convened anti-Home Rule demonstration in the grounds of Compton Place, his East Sussex residence.[149] Following the improvement in rail connection between itself and London, Eastbourne became home to a 'residential rentier class', which sat comfortably alongside 'traditional social and sectarian authorities.'[150] Despite its aristocratic pretensions it was 'a quintessentially middle class town' providing fertile ground for the Unionist Party, the strength of whom was to be illustrated by the rally.[151] On the day of the demonstrations the *Eastbourne Chronicle* published in some detail the elaborate arrangements that local Unionists had planned. There were to be five muster points in the town, from where the various contingents would converge and march down Eastbourne's main thoroughfares toward Compton Place (indeed one local business, Evenden's, advertised the fact that a fine view of 'the massed procession' could be gained from the windows of their shop, and seats could be secured for 5 shillings each). The procession would be led by an old soldier carrying a union jack and 'no fewer than seven bands' and contingents of the Primrose League and Constitutional Clubs would be represented and led by their own standards. It was announced too that Lord Charles Beresford would be the principal speaker; and, as at Liverpool in 1912, he was to 'ride in a carriage drawn by a gun's crew of naval veterans.'[152]

In Eastbourne's early days as a beach resort, the local worthies had moved quickly to ban Salvation Army parades, as their 'corybantic Christianity' had upset the town's genteel patrons, including the Revd C. L. Dodgson (Lewis Carroll) who complained that these musical processions brought together 'a mob of the worst and noisiest of all the roughs and of producing an awful lot of profane fun.'[153] No such profanity in 1914, where the procession ran like clockwork and fulsome praise was given to 'the superior organising ability of Mr William S. Keyte' (the local Unionist agent) who had under his commanded a band of helpers who assiduously carried out his instructions. Sussex was a very Conservative place,[154] and this is reflected in the extraordinary number of local Party and Primrose League contingents that took part in the parade. They came from all over Sussex, including nearby Lewes, where a penchant for no-popery celebrations was well known.[155] It was also reported that 20 men from the British League, 'the fighting men for Ulster', were present and helped to organise the gathering at Compton Place.

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[148] [Hull] *Daily News*, 8 June 1914
[149] Eastbourne owed its prosperity to the investment made in the town by the Devonshire family, see D. Cannadine, *Lords and Landlords: The Aristocracy and the Towns, 1774-1967* (Leicester, 1980), part 3.
[150] P. J. Waller, *Town, City, and Nation: England, 1850-1914* (Oxford: OUP, 1983), p. 139
[151] Cannadine, *Lords and Landlords*, p. 361
[152] *Eastbourne Chronicle*, 6 June 1914
[153] Waller, *Town, City, and Nation*, p. 140
[154] Pugh, *Tories and the People*, p. 103-4; Pelling, *Social Geography*, p. 70
[155] J. E. Etherington, 'The community origin of the Lewes Guy Fawkes night celebrations'. *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 128 (1990), 195-224

Significant, too, was the symbolism of the march, for a banner carried by a Sussex ontingent at the great demonstration at Hyde Park was given a prominent position in the march, as was a union flag crowned with laurels that had accompanied British troops when they landed in Mombassa to take possession of the Uganda protectorate in 1897. But the place of honour was reserved for Beresford and his gun crew. The *Eastbourne Gazette* printed in full the order of procession and the *Chronicle* published the names, addresses and years of service the veteran's gun crew (they had an aggregate of 363 years service between them all).[156] Before setting off for the procession these old tars had taken lunch with Beresford, and one of their number toasted him thus: '"On behalf of the naval veterans of East Sussex we give you a hearty welcome and sincerely hope that the Almighty will spare you to be our veteran admiral for years to come."' [157]

The only opposition to the parade came from a small 'knot of dissentients' and a man who waved a green flag in the town centre. Otherwise the reaction of the townspeople was enthusiastic, with many joining in the procession. At Compton Place, where 10,000 had gathered in the grounds, the Duke of Devonshire introduced Lord Charles Beresford who was greeted with cries of "Good old Condor!", and 'For he's a jolly good fellow.' Beresford, who was a very confident public speaker, gave a 'racy speech', which evoked much audience participation. 'What do all your flags mean?' he asked, 'a voice: "union"; 'is the maintenance of the union still the object of the Unionist Party?', 'cries of "Yes" and "of course it is."' Beresford pointed out that the 'enormous crowds that greet Sir Edward Carson are all composed of working men' upon which the crowd 'gave three cheers for the Ulster leader.'[158] Upon the conclusion of the speeches two buglers advanced to the front of the platform and sounded 'the "Assembly" and one sustained note.' After a pause they followed this with the call to attention, upon which the Duke of Devonshire put the resolution denouncing the Home Rule Bill which was carried with acclamation (and a copy of which was to be sent to Carson). 'The Union Jack on the platform was then unfurled amid cheers, all the men present taking off their hats.'[159]

The Covenanting bandwagon turned next to Leeds, where, in April, there had been a 'poster parade' through the city, and photographs in the Belfast press showed ten sandwich-board men spelling out with a letter each NO HOME RULE.[160] It is interesting too that in their report of the Leeds meeting the *Times* opined that 'Liberalism is fond of claiming the thickly populated centres of the North particularly in the West Riding, as its own preserves', but, as they put it, '25,000 Yorkshiremen cannot be got together to demonstrate on a blazing Saturday afternoon unless they feel certain that there is something to demonstrate about.'[161] Ten long processions had marched the four miles from the confines of the city, attracting followers as they went, to Woodhouse Moor for the demonstration, and the *Yorkshire Post* though that the crowds were nearer 30,000

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[156] See Appendix 2
[157] *Eastbourne Chronicle*, 13 June 1914
[158] *Eastbourne Gazette*, 10 June 1914
[159] *Eastbourne Chronicle*, 13 June 1914
[160] *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 1 April 1914
[161] *Times*, 15 June 1914

'though many of them had only come "to see the fun."' The chief speakers happened to be two notable Catholic Unionists, the Duke of Norfolk and Sir Mark Sykes, and they came in for particular abuse from 'gang of rowdies from East Leeds.'[162] This gang seemed to be chiefly Irish, and they surged towards their platforms shouting 'Catholic' and brandishing 'ugly-looking shillelaghs and sticks trimmed with imitation shamrocks and green ribbons' and their cry of '"Three Cheers for Ireland" was met with a full throated response.'[163]

Sykes, the MP for Central Hull, had been a soldier and explorer in his youth, and was described in the Hull press as being 'slim, tall, alert [with] wire and whipcord nerves'.[164] He struggled gamely on until sticks and stones began to be thrown, and the shouting and pushing became so great that the platform rocked and a reporters table was smashed. The would-be speakers were escorted away by the police, and then there ensued a battle for possession of the platform between the police and the Irish. 'A slip of a girl in a green jersey with long hair' then mounted the platform, and after flourishing her shillelagh she essayed a jig. At this point she was then 'unceremoniously thrown off' the platform, which enraged the Home Rulers and the police were forced 'to unloose their truncheons'. There were many casualties for the ambulance men. Nevertheless, the Irish cohort seemed satisfied that they had turned the moor 'into a Donnybrook Fair.'[165]

Carson remained the main draw, and the next meetings of the Covenanters were to take place in the more fertile Unionist territory of Lancashire, specifically at Blackburn and Bolton. The predicted attendance at these meetings is indicative of the confidence of the Lancashire Unionists, whose strength in the county was often underestimated.[166] Although the double member seat of Blackburn was represented in 1914 by one Liberal and one Labour MP, between 1881 and 1906 the town had been held for 25 years by the Unionists (and a free-trade Tory even survived the 1906 landslide).[167] Municipally, however, the Tories were still dominant in Blackburn.[168] This state of affairs was bolstered by the firm links between the Tories and the established church in the town. A bishop of Blackburn in the 1890s told his flock that a vote for the Conservatives was a vote for the Church, and as late as 1910 Bishop Thornton appeared alongside fifteen of his clergy on a public platform in support of the Unionist Party.[169] (Although the selection of Lord Robert Cecil - a High Churchman - as the Conservative candidate for Blackburn caused serious controversy among the town's militant Protestants:)[170]

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[162] *Yorkshire Post*, 15 June 1914
[163] *Leeds Mercury*, 15 June 1914
[164] John Markham, 'The Election Campaigns of Mark Sykes in Buckrose and Hull', *East Yorkshire Historian*, 2 (2001), p. 65
[165] *Times*, 15 June 1914
[166] Tanner, *Labour Party*, p. 146
[167] Pelling, *Social Geography*, p. 262
[168] G. N. Trodd, 'Political Change and the working Class in Blackburn and Burnley, 1880-1914', PhD Thesis, Lancaster University (1978), p. 344
[169] Matthew Cole, 'Blackburn at the Polls: Elections and Politics in the Town's History', Alan Duckworth, ed., *Aspects of Blackburn* (Barnsley: Wharncliffe, 1999), p. 60
[170] 'Every vote given to Cecil is a vote against Protestantism', *Lancashire Daily Post*, 17 January 1910, see also *Northern Daily Telegraph*, 5 January 1910;

What is more, the town had seen the growth of a vibrant local Orange Order from the late 1860s onwards - whose strength was manifest in the bricks and mortar of several Orange Halls. Despite these agents of militant working-class Protestantism the Unionists could still portray themselves as the Protestant Party and, perhaps more surprisingly, the 'friends of Labour' – witness the collaboration in the 1910 elections between the local 'Conservative Labour Party' and the 'Protestant Electoral Council.'[171] The location was, therefore, propitious. 'It is some time since a political event aroused so much interest locally', reported the *Blackburn Telegraph*. 'Elaborate arrangements have been made for the accommodation of the fifty thousand people who are expected to be present', and in a nod to the beer and skittles tradition of the Party, they also announced that 'after the speech making there will be dancing and sports.'[172]

In the event, they were to be slightly disappointed with the turnout. Although the chairman claimed that it was 'one of the largest demonstrations that had ever been held in that part of Lancashire by any Party', the paper noted that the attendance was probably less than 10,000.[173] Not surprisingly, the Liberal press delighted in the news. The *Manchester Guardian* noted that the 'Tories and the Covenanters had planned it on the vast scale to which the American politician is more accustomed'. Yet for all the publicity they bought, and the 80,000 tickets that had been distributed, they thought that there were only around 6,000 present, 'even with a "gent's sack race" and a "ladies egg and spoon race" and other athletic pleasantries which must have jarred Edward Carson's nerves.'[174] The *Lancashire Daily Post* scoffed that 'the rosy estimate of 100,000 people published in anticipation was never approached' and they thought that a crowd of fifteen thousand was more likely. An attendance attributable, they thought, to 'the magnificent weather inducing many thousands to go to the seaside.'[175]

Carson made his Blackburn speech in the prosaic surroundings of a field called Intack which abutted the Corporation tram-sheds. The crowd was sympathetic, lively, and rather capricious. When Carson declared that "wars had been waged to keep people in, but never to drive them out, and Ulster would not become a precedent in this way" there were cheers and someone shouted "rub it in lad" followed by uproarious laughter.[176] Moving on to a disquisition on the history of the Union "which had quelled all the racial passions of the Irish people" he asked rhetorically whether England was going to "smash it" at which there were cries of "no" and "not likely", and when one man shouted "yes, we will smash it up" the man who made this remark was 'promptly struck over the head by a woman.'[177] The gathering was marred by the wet weather, and a flunkey was

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[171] Joyce, *Work, Society, and Politics*, p. 257; Trodd, 'Blackburn and Burnley', pp. 350,359

[172] *Blackburn Weekly Telegraph*, 20 June 1914. In nearby Burnley the local Unionist Party announced that at their next social occasion there would be 'the following competitions for adults: 100 yards flat, egg and spoon race, three legged race, needle threading, potato gathering, tug of war, and climbing the greasy pole; and for children, obstacle race, flat race, skipping, three legged race, dancing, and "flower pot" race', see *Burnley Express and Advertiser*, 24 June 1914

[173] *Blackburn Weekly Telegraph*, 27 June 1914

[174] *Manchester Guardian*, 22 June 1913

[175] *Lancashire Daily Post*, 20 June 1914

[176] *Liverpool Courier*, 22 June 1914

[177] *Blackburn Weekly Telegraph*, 27 June 1914

obliged to hold Carson's umbrella. As the rain got heavier, a decision was made to conclude the meeting.

This was merely Carson's first engagement that day. From Blackburn he motored to 'imperially-minded' Bolton, so described by the local *Bolton Journal* because of its important commercial links with the Empire - not least the Raj where it sent at least two-fifths of its exports.[178] The Unionists had been badly beaten here in 1910, though the town did have the typical Lancastrian combination of a large Irish population (almost 10 per cent in the 1880s), a strong Conservative Working Men's Association, and militant native Protestantism. Indeed, in 1896 the hostility of prominent Bolton Nonconformists towards the Irish reported to Gladstone, and in 1906 local Protestants threatened to put forward their own candidate until the Unionist candidate there made concessions to them on Church discipline.[179] The first ever visit of a reigning monarch to the town had occurred as recently as 1913 when King George V and Queen Mary had arrived on a brilliant July day to be hailed by tens of thousands.[180] Carson's visit was almost as regal. On his way from Blackburn he had passed through Darwen where 'great numbers of the residents turned out to cheer the Irish leader, the footpaths being crowded with people, many of whom waved small union jacks.'[181] As he drove through the country roads of East Lancashire many turned out to cheer him as he passed.[182] A 'pilot car' had preceded his car from Blackburn, and at the entrance to Bolton this duty was taken up by a local car, which was gaily decorated in red, white, and blue.

It was an exciting Saturday in Bolton. It was 'Alexandra Day', a charitable and patriotic occasion when street collections were made in aid of hospitals and other charities, and there were many ladies in the town centre distributing wild roses in exchange for donations. Perhaps due to this holiday spirit, many felt moved to sign the British Covenant. When Carson's motorcar was about a mile from the centre of town it was stopped and he was approached by one of these ladies from whom he bought a rose, many other people then crowded round the car, and much cheering and hand shaking was indulged in. From there he was escorted to the venue of the rally, Leven Hall, by a cheering body of young men carrying flags and banners, as well as the Wingate Temperance band and the Bolton English Concertina Band. Gathered at the field was a crowd numbering between 12-15,000 - with 300 stewards - all of whom had been issued with tickets to prevent Suffragette infiltration. In appreciation of this large crowd Carson's face was apparently 'wreathed with smiles' as he ascended the dais.[183] However, the weather took a turn for the worst and he was forced to deliver his address during a downpour, 'No one, however, thought of moving to shelter. The enthusiasm of

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[178] *Bolton Journal*, 7 August 1914
[179] Bebbington, *Nonconformist Conscience*, p. 103; Pelling, *Social Geography*, p. 254; Clarke, *Lancashire*, p. 265
[180] G. J. Bryant, 'Bolton and the outbreak of the First World War', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire & Cheshire*, 138 (1989 for 1988), p. 183
[181] *Irish Times*, 22 June 1914
[182] *Liverpool Courier*, 22 June 1914
[183] *Bolton Journal and Guardian*, 22 June 1914

the people was waterproof, and [Carson] never had a more cordial or sympathetic audience.'[184]

The *Manchester Courier* observed that 'manifest and whole-hearted admiration for the Ulster volunteers' was 'particularly noticeable' among the crowds at Bolton'.[185] Carson certainly devoted much of his speech to the UVF, and, judging by the responses from the crowd, their activity struck a chord in Lancashire – and may even have been imitated in the mill towns of that county. "They all knew something of the Ulster Volunteers" said Carson, "I am proud of the Ulster volunteers. I hear there are other volunteers in Ireland" then someone shouted in "In Wigan too." Carson evidently knew about these few shoots of militancy in Lancashire and bellowed that "if I gather anything from the spirit of the meetings that I have addressed throughout Great Britain, if they entered on this Civil war in Ulster, the Civil War would not be confined to Ulster" which provoked the inevitable response from a voice in the crowd: "it will be here."[186] At the conclusion of the meeting Carson proceeded to a local schoolroom where he met a deputation of local Orangemen in full regalia. One Orangeman announced that "a disciple of Jesus Christ wishes you victory, and God be with you." Carson was then officially welcomed by Dr Mountcastle (Grand Master of the Manchester Orange Order) who told him he was inspiration to Orangemen in England. In response to a vote of thanks, Carson said, "Before I go away I simply say, No Surrender."[187]

This defiant mood was not confined to the industrial heartland of Lancashire. Two weeks later in the salubrious suburban surroundings of South London thousands of ardent Unionists gathered at the London County Athletic Grounds at Herne Hill.[188] It has been noted that nearby Croydon had provided the archetype for the growth of 'villa Toryism' at the turn of the century, and Herne Hill was very much in this orbit.[189] In March, it was reported that over 1,000 people had signed the British Covenant in that part of South London alone (and the local Unionists had passed an anti-Home Rule resolution in May), so there was obviously some pro-Ulster enthusiasm in the borough.[190]

A pall had been cast over the meeting by the recent death of South Londoner and Unionist idol Joseph Chamberlain, and the many Union flags there flew at half-mast.[191] Notwithstanding the funereal gloom, the meeting was very well attended. With the typical floridity of the Edwardian journalist, the reporter from the *South London Press* painted a very vivid picture of the scene at the Athletic Ground:

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[184] *Irish Times*, 22 June 1914
[185] *Manchester Courier*, 22 June 1914
[186] *Bolton Evening News*, 22 June 1914
[187] *Bolton Journal and Guardian*, 22 June 1914
[188] Colvin, *Carson*, p. 403
[189] Franz Coetzee, 'Villa Toryism Reconsidered: Conservatism and Suburban Sensibilities in Late-Victorian Croydon', *Parliamentary History*, 16 (1997), pp. 29-47
[190] *Times*, 17 March 1914; Telegram to from Herne Hill Unionist Association to Arthur Steel-Maitland 20 May 1914. SRO, SMP/GD/193/163/44
[191] *Norwood Review and Crystal Palace Reporter*, 11 July 1914

> Imagine that you are perched on a high platform and that in front of you, extending, it seems to you, almost to the sky-line, there is a perfect sea of heads; imagine that picture, and then you will be able to realise the scene which presented itself to Sir Edward Carson.[192]

The *Times* was impressed that despite the baking hot weather almost ten thousand people had gathered 'under the blazing sun [to make] themselves perspire cheering for Ulster and groaning the government.'[193] The local MP Sir Harry Samuel chaired the meeting and told the audience that 'the cause of Ulster was the cause of Britain', and 'they stood side by side, and heart to heart' with the Northern Irish Loyalists. Carson received a prolonged ovation on rising , and told the vast crowd that Ulster would never 'yield to the point of a bayonet' and that he was 'animated with one thing, and one thing alone, which is the love of my country and my belief in you (cheers).'[194]

His belief in the support that Ulster enjoyed among the British people would surely have been stiffened by that afternoon's meeting. For the gravity of the gathering was stressed in a number of quarters, and the palpable seriousness of the demonstrators – so often commented upon wherever Carson spoke – was noticed by the local press. 'It was a solemn occasion' and 'unanimity prevailed', stressed the *South London Press*, 'in everyone's mind there was the grim, horrible spectre of civil war hovering above them. It made them thoughtful.'[195] If anything served to remind the gathering of this danger then it would surely have been 'the soldierly body of men forming a detachment of the British League for the Defence of Ulster' wearing 'union jack armlets' who escorted Carson to the platform.[196]The presence of volunteers from the British League at Herne Hill is important, and speaks of increased militancy in the summer of 1914. Elsewhere that July, 500 volunteers had gathered at a camp at Wealdstone in the London commuter belt. These men were reported to be prepared 'at a moment's notice to take up arms and proceed to the help of the loyalists of Ulster'. Indeed, a number of these men had already spent 'a week under canvas' but most of the volunteers had travelled to the camp for the presentation and blessing of colours – a yellow standard upon which was written 'For King and Union' – by Lord Willoughby de Broke.[197]

Such was the atmosphere in the country before the Buckingham Palace Conference in July. The King himself, who had convened the meeting, received a flood of telegrams 'urging him to live up to his role as defender of the faith, and not to hand over Ulster to the Pope of Rome.'[198] So did Carson. 'Stand by the Covenant come what may, England's Protestants are with you. God defend the right', wired William Adam from Woolwich. Mr William Angus, sent a message from Galashiels that 'The Lord's command upon thee all Ulster must be excluded and time limit abolished stand firm', and a telegram from Cumberland told him that 'Thousands of Christians [are] praying for you at Keswick.' An

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[192] *South London Press*, 10 July 1914
[193] *Times*, 6 July 1914
[194] *Norwood Review and Crystal Palace Reporter*, 11 July 1914
[195] *South London Press*, 10 July 1914
[196] *Norwood News*, 11 July 1914
[197] *Morning Post* 3 July 1914
[198] Harold Nicholson, *King George V* (London, 1952), p. 297

anonymous Covenanter from Stepney expressed himself succinctly: 'Boats burned retreat means chaos strength front and win through'; and another person warned him to 'Act the patriot. Do not play the part of the harlot against whom Solomon decided.'[199]

The conference would soon drift to an impasse, and some of those present had reason to be particularly pessimistic. In fact the Liberal Chief Secretary for Ireland at that time, Liverpool-born Augustine Birrell, had been informed by the King that an anonymous 'man of importance' had reported to His Majesty 'that in addition to 100,000 poor Irish who have long made my native city of Liverpool joyful there were another 100,000 Orangemen, all well to do citizens, who on the passage of the Home Rule Bill would desert their homes, and flock to Belfast to fight all and sundry.'[200] It is surely no coincidence that Salvidge's own son recalled that in the months before the outbreak of the Great War his father 'took care that Liverpool's political temperature should be kept at *fever heat*' [emphasis added].[201]

By the end of July 1914 anti-Home Rule opinion among the British public was perhaps at its most virulent since the 1880s. Milner was busily organising county committees of the BLSUU in Northamptonshire and elsewhere, and the UUC wrote in their 1915 yearbook that the 'increasing demand for [speakers from Ulster] and the attentive hearing given to [them and our] canvassers showed clearly that the British people were at last awakening to the danger which awaited the Unionist minority in Ireland' (and by March 1914 the UWUC had written to 14,902 electors in 65 constituencies).[202] The UDL estimated that up to two million people had signed the British Covenant, though Walter Long wrote that 'it will never be known how many persons actually signed the British covenant. The war stopped the return to HQ of signature sheets in the country, and those received after the end of July were not counted.' He calculated that by 31 July 1914 over 831,000 men had signed and over 530,000 women.[203] One historian at least has claimed that this is a 'wildly exaggerated number',[204] yet the figures given by Long are precise enough to be given some credence. Certainly it seems that a new militancy was abroad among Unionist Party members. Leo Amery wrote ominously to Law that

> the fact is and everything I see and hear makes one feel it more strongly every day, that the policy of excluding Ulster, and inferentially in effect accepting Home Rule for the rest of Ireland, has been absolutely detested by the rank and file of the Party and, if it had succeeded, would have led to something like an open explosion.[205]

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[199] Telegrams to Carson, 21-24 July 1914. PRONI, D/1507/A/6/20, 28, 30, 36, see also Colvin, *Carson*, p. 416

[200] Leon O'Broin, *The Chief Secretary: Augustine Birrell in Ireland* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1969), p.65.

[201] Salvidge, *Salvidge*, p. 134

[202] Copy of a letter from Viscount Milner to Sir Manningham Buller, 25 July 1914, BLO, MS Dep 41, 140-143; *The Ulster Unionist Council and Ulster Union of Constitutional Associations Year Book ... 1915* (Belfast 1915); UWUC Executive Committee Minutes, 19 May 1914 (PRONI, D/1098/1/2).

[203] Long, *Memories*, p. 203.

[204] Smith, *Tories and Ireland*, p. 175

[205] Letter from Leopold Amery to Andrew Bonar Law, 25 July 1914. HLRO, BL/33/1/46

What form this 'explosion' would take is unclear, but some Unionists were jubilant at the perceived hardening of pro-Ulster sentiment in the country. Indeed, Milner wrote stridently to Carson that he did not see 'why we should give in any further. The government are in a weak position. They can't fight because they can't rely on the army, and they daren't face an election, because they know they would be beaten.[206] However the mood in the country made Carson himself less than equable as, in his opinion, he 'saw no way back and no way forward' and gloomily predicted 'the spread of Irish and Protestant-Catholic strife in England and Scotland, the dominions and the United States.'[207]

III

One distinguished historian has written that '[a]t the very end of July war in Ulster seemed certain' and that the UVF were ready to enact a *coup d'etat* should Carson give the signal.[208] Moreover, the Ulstermen were already reaching out to their allies in Britain for practical support. Craig, no doubt anticipating a blockade, informed Carson that supporters in Glasgow would send a "shipload of whatever necessaries we may requisition ... i.e. flour, meal, tinned beef, tea, sugar, etc.', and that he hoped that Milner and the British Covenanters might organise something similar in the English ports. He also expected that sympathetic meetings would be held in Glasgow and other entrepots, arguing that '[t]here is no doubt that the further afield that the heather is fired the better for our purpose.'[209] On the 30th of July the Committee of the 'Help the Ulster Women and Children Council' met in London to prepare for the expected influx of 'Loyalist refugees', and they announced in the *Times* that 'they will be glad to hear from anyone willing to help in the matter, either financially or by offers of hospitality', and soon English country houses were hurriedly preparing for arrivals from Ulster.[210] Against this disturbing backdrop Lord Willoughby de Broke received an anxious letter from Napier, New Zealand, written by a recent English emigrant. This correspondent, one Percival Witherley, fully expected the Ulster impasse to lead to armed conflict, and hoped that given the fractious political atmosphere in the Antipodes 'the area of conflict should, if possible be confined to the United Kingdom.' Signing off despondently, he wrote that 'by the time this letter reaches you, the country – I fear – will be in the throes of Civil war. And all for Redmond. My gracious – what a wicked thing!'[211] His pessimism was well-founded; but it is surely poignant that by the time his letter reached London it was Europe, and not Ireland, that was at war. Yet, for Asquith, this was a blessing. Writing to

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[206] Letter from Viscount Milner to Sir Edward Carson, 21 July 1914. PRONI, D/1507/A/6/40

[207] J. A. Spender, and Cyril Asquith, *Life of Herbert Henry Asquith, Lord Oxford and Asquith, volume II* (London: Hutchinson, 1932), p. 53

[208] Stewart, *Ulster Crisis*, p. 231

[209] Colvin, *Carson*, p. 422

[210] *Times*, 31 July 1914; see also Sir Charles Petrie Bt., *Chapters of Life* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1950), p. 41

[211] Wetherley noted wearily that 'any expression of opinion from anti-Home Rulers in any of the Dominions only invites a like expression from pro-Home Rulers.' Letter from Percival Witherley to Lord Willoughby de Broke, 27 July 1914. HLRO, WB/10/15

Lady Ottoline Morell on the 25 July, he noted that the European crisis 'will take attention away from Ulster, which is a good thing.'[212]

[212] Letter from H. H. Asquith to Lady Ottoline Morell, 25 July 1914, in Peter Vansittart, *Voices from the Great War* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1981), p. 12

7

Conclusion:
Ulster, Crowds, and Britishness

It is quite possible, however, that the question of Home Rule may become so acute that all other questions will sink; and indeed, I hope this will be the case

Letter from Andrew Bonar Law to Arthur Taylor
1 October 1913. HLRO, BLP 33/5/62

For no other reason than their opposition to Home Rule, if a general election had been called in 1914 the Unionists would have won. Their leader, Andrew Bonar Law, having spent Edwardian Britain's Indian summer throwing bricks into Asquith's garden, eventually heard a pleasing smash as he hit the Liberal's greenhouse. The fragile edifice that he demolished was the belief that the British public could stomach Home Rule for Ireland. When we also consider contemporary fears of the likelihood of civil war in Ireland, which so disturbed the English electorate 'as to cause a strong revulsion of feeling against the Liberals', then the shakiness of the government's position in 1914 becomes clear.[1]

Some have argued that in fact the Unionists were in a parlous state in 1914,[2] and for all that 'comradely unanimity in the struggle against Home Rule'[3], their support for Ulster was 'at best a one card trick'.[4] To be sure, as some argued at the time, it would have been a step to short term 'political dominance' but not to victory in 'the social war that now holds the people's mind'.[5] For a convincing and attractive programme of social reform from the Unionists had still to be drawn up. Yet the fortunes of the Unionist Party are not our primary concern. What interests us is the fact that their campaign against Home Rule was so appealing. This was because the latter Edwardian era was the last period that Ireland *seriously* mattered in British politics (in the sense of deciding general elections); and it mattered not only because Ireland was still in the union, but because British society did not emerge from the long-nineteenth century until after the Great War.

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[1] Ervine, *Carson and the Ulster Movement*, p. 72
[2] S. Ball, *The Conservative Party and British Politics, 1902-1951* (London: Longman, 1995), pp. 55-56
[3] Thomas Kennedy, 'Tory Radicalism and the Home Rule Crisis, 1910-1914: The Case of Lord Willoughby', *Canadian Journal of History*, 37, 1 (2002), p. 38
[4] Stuart Ball, 'Factors in Opposition Performance: The Conservative Experience since 1867', Stuart Ball and Anthony Seldon, eds, *Recovering Power: The Conservatives in Opposition since 1867* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2005), p. 15
[5] K. Feiling, *Toryism: A Political Dialogue* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1913), p. 8; David Dutton, 'Conservatism in Crisis: 1910-1915', Stuart Ball and Anthony Seldon, *Recovering Power: The Conservatives in Opposition since 1867* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2005), p. 125

Historians are right to argue that Britain was on the cusp of change in this period, but it had not *yet* reached the watershed. As one historian has noted of politics in Blackburn and Burnley, the communal loyalties that had sustained the Tories 'did not crumble overnight.'[6] To be sure, the Edwardian era witnessed plenty of modern political developments - syndicalism, suffragism, new-Liberalism, and so on - but it was the Union that dominated politics in the last two years before the Great War - *and* mobilised the most supporters. Did the campaign against National Insurance bring legions of torch-bearers on to the streets? Could even the Suffragettes muster similar numbers of supporters in demonstrations from Inverness to Truro?

After Carson's appearance in the Scottish Capital, the Liberal *Edinburgh Evening News* was minded to 'contrast ... the solid masses who acclaimed Gladstone [with] the army of masqueraders who preceded the Orange Leader.'[7] But according to the Grand Old Man's own calculations he had addressed 86,930 people in the course of his celebrated Midlothian campaign.[8] Yet in the two years before 1914 at least ten times as many heard Sir Edward Carson (or at least saw him) denounce Home Rule, and it is striking the number of occasions that his appearance would prompt breathless editorials in local newspapers noting the absolutely unprecedented scale of the rallies.

For this is an era of massive interest and participation in politics. It should now be apparent that apathy with regard to the Irish question was certainly not as widespread as we have been led to believe, but neither was unfettered passion for Ulster. What dictated the response was in many cases down to regional idiosyncrasies: with some regions demonstrating their sympathy with the Ulstermen more fervently than others. Nevertheless, there were very few parts of Edwardian Britain that did not witness a flourishing of support for the Unionists' cause. This echoes an observation made of the Primrose League: that it was not the predictably high membership of the League in the Home Counties 'but that of Derby, Newcastle, and Rochdale which underlines the Conservatives' claim to be the national Party.'[9]

The importance of the Empire in provincial Britain cities should not be forgotten. A recent work examined the tangible imprint that 'the cultural history of modern imperialism'[10] has left on cities such as Glasgow and Manchester, as well as London. These trends had significant implications for the fate of Home Rule because the imperial ethos of these cities made them particularly sensitive to the Irish question - since, in a sense, Ulster represented the Imperial mission in microcosm, with the Protestant Loyalists 'holding the pass' for the Empire. The extent to which grand notions of imperial destiny percolated down to the middling and lower classes and impacted on their lives is difficult to measure due to the paucity of evidence. But having established that

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[6] Trodd, 'Blackburn and Burnley', p. 352
[7] *Edinburgh Evening News*, 14 June 1913
[8] Roy Jenkins, *Gladstone* (London: Macmillan, 1995), p. 428
[9] Joyce, *Work, Society, and Politics*, p. 97
[10] Felix Driver and David Gilbert, 'Imperial cities: overlapping territories, intertwined histories', Felix Driver and David Gilbert, eds, *Imperial Cities: Landscape, Display and Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 4

the study of crowds can remedy this deficiency, the recent upsurge in interest in Irish migration to Britain and its accompanying sectarianism can be redeployed to further our understanding of the implications of the Irish question in Britain.[11]

The frictions between native Protestants and Irish Catholics were a commonplace feature of urban life in Victorian and Edwardian Britain. This fact served to recast the intricacies of the Irish question into something more Manichean, and hence more easily understood. John Belchem has shown us how, in the nineteenth century, Protestant demagogues like the Reverend Hugh McNeile of Liverpool 'drew upon an English narrative of libertarian struggle which recognised that 'it is to their qualities, derived from their religion, that Englishmen owe their liberties.'[12]Joan Smith has argued that this view was enthusiastically endorsed in Glasgow as well as Liverpool, as aggressive Protestantism became central to the working man's 'common sense' definition of British patriotism.[13] These two cities in particular have an enduring reputation for sectarianism, but such religious friction was actually commonplace in most parts of urban Britain, but this has been rarely studied.

Judging by the speaking tours of Carson, Bonar Law, and Craig, they obviously recognised that such hostility existed in places other than the Mersey and the Clyde. These politicians appreciated more than their colleagues in Parliament that the fate of Ulster was still a live issue away from Westminster, and we should remember that it was in the provinces where their Party had historically been most successful in 'celebrating the virtues of the 'Tory working man' and the 'working-class jingo.'[14] What is more, the recent glamorisation and exaggeration of Celtic nationalism in Victorian Britain has meant that the 'widespread Welsh, Irish, and Scottish unionism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is in danger of becoming a neglected subject.'[15] After all, noted the *Times*, Unionist advance in Edwardian Scotland was 'the most pronounced electioneering increment of the time'.[16]

It was the particular campaigning skill of the Unionists in this period in mobilising their supporters across the country that set them apart. They could achieve this, primarily, because the issue was one that resonated with the public; but, perhaps as importantly, the Edwardian Unionists re-invented political theatre. Recalling his time in India, Lord Curzon had noted that 'Orientals' were impressed by 'barbaric splendour', and it is perhaps no coincidence that as a consequence there was 'a remarkable flowering of

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[11] There is an absolute wealth of literature on this subject - recently catalogued in a bibliographical essay by Don MacRaild in *Irish Migrants*, pp. 210-219

[12] Belchem, *Merseypride*, p. 124.

[13] Joan Smith, 'Class, skill, and sectarianism in Glasgow and Liverpool, 1880-1914', R. J. Morris, ed., *Class, Power, and Social Structure in British Nineteenth Century Towns*, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1986), p. 124

[14] J. Lawrence, 'Urban Toryism', p. 634

[15] J. C. D. Clark, *Our Shadowed Present: Modernism, Post-Modernism, and History* (London: Atlantic, 2003), p. 105

[16] *Times*, 28 November 1913

ceremonial and spectacle' in Edwardian Britain after his return.[17] The years surrounding the Delhi Durbar were undoubtedly the zenith of imperial pomp and circumstance, and Eric Hobsbawm has made the perceptive comment that the Great War marks a divide in popular 'symbolic discourse' between the 'operatic and the prosaic'.[18] This is an observation eminently applicable to the political sphere too – when after 1914 do we see covenants, torch-light processions, horseless carriages and the like? (The UWUC even employed a conjuror 'as the means of securing audience amongst the working classes.')[19]

It is increasingly apparent that the stunning street theatre of the Unionist campaign before the Great War was without peer. To understand what these histrionics denote it is worth going back again to the work of Emile Durkheim. For Durkheim collective behaviour should not be seen just as a means of achieving solidarity. He argued that there was another elementary motivation behind such activity: namely, the need to uphold 'at regular intervals the collective sentiments and collective ideas which make its unity and personality.'[20] In other words, political ritual is not just meant as an expression of social cohesion, though that is important, it is also intended to function as a means of emphasizing certain beliefs which are considered fundamental to the group in question. Another social theorist, Steven Lukes, has argued that these phenomena can be categorised as 'rule governed activity of a symbolic character which draws the attention of its participants to objects of thought and feeling which they hold to be of special significance.'[21] What object had more significance in 1914 than the Union itself?

This argument shows us that the sort of collective activity that we have examined can at the very least reinforce a certain world view, or political conviction; and when we accept that the reverence afforded Carson was emblematic of a wider attachment to the Union then it is obvious that the cognitive dimension of political ritual was as important as its unificatory function.[22] Even so, it is arguable that the integrative potential of political ritual has been overplayed, as more often than not it is actually a divisive activity. In this sense the grand claims for national unity made by the authors who studied the Coronation of 1953, for example, are simply unrealistic.[23] Therefore we would do well to remember that the campaign against Home Rule before 1914 was a highly controversial issue. Not everyone in Britain agreed with such an intransigent stance; consequently all that rallies, crowds, and processions merely served to strengthen one faction. Consider the case of modern Northern Ireland. If that province were an exclusively Protestant state, Orangemen celebrating their day of deliverance from Popery, as they would see it, would be 'an occasion celebrating communal solidarity, as Independence Day is in America.'

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[17] David Cannadine, 'Lord Curzon as ceremonial impresario', David Cannadine, ed., *Aspects of aristocracy: grandeur and decline in modern Britain* (London: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 84, 77

[18] Eric Hobsbawm, 'Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914', Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 303

[19] Mr Morris St Clair, 'a conjuror and entertainer', accompanied the Ulster mission to Newmarket in Cambridgeshire, see Urquhart, *Minutes*, p. 35

[20] Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, p. 427

[21] Steven Lukes, *Essays in Social Theory* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1977), pp. 68-9

[22] Lukes, *Essays*, p. 69

[23] Edward Shills, and Michael Young, 'The Meaning of the Coronation', *Sociological Review*, 1 (1953) p. 67

However, 'in a regime with divided authority, however, the parades of Orangemen - especially when they march through Catholic quarters of towns - intensify discord.'[24] In view of the similarity between Carson's progress through British cities and the disruptive carnival that accompanies 'The Twelfth' in Ireland, the very least we can claim is that the anti-Home Rule movement was an example of the 'mobilisation of bias.'[25]

Of course some historians have observed that the attraction of political jamborees should not imply complete consensus.[26] Working class attendance at such 'patriotic' events was very often based upon the 'enjoyment of the show of conservative patriotism rather than outright approval.'[27]This is important, but working class Conservatism was a very potent force before the Great War (and indeed for the rest of the century). Following Marx, Tressell, and all those commentators who despaired of the British working classes' lack of objective self-interest, G. K. Chesterton - writing in the *Neolith* in 1907 - noted pithily (but without any disapprobation): "[a] few men talked of freedom, while England talked of ale."[28] For we must acknowledge 'that flag-saluting, foreigner-hating, peer-respecting side of the plebeian mind', and even the 'instinctive chauvinism and racism' of the working classes.[29]

There are of course obvious ideological interpretations that we should not ignore. 'It was not the love of the Orangeman that caused the Duke of This and My Lady That to exert themselves so mightily in [sic] behalf of the Union', commented a scathing St John Ervine in 1915, 'it was the simple desire to be delivered from the burden of contributing any more money to the cost of maintaining their country than they could help.'[30] And at least one historian has argued that ethnic hostility in Lancashire, for example, 'was fostered by capital operating through the Tory Party as a means of dividing and controlling the working class', and another has reminded us of the importance of the 'deference voter' in British society.[31] But whatever the cause of this division in British society, 'a highly emotional patriotism lay just below the surface'.[32] And it was a patriotism which could be exploited. For all his aristocratic credentials Lord Willoughby de Broke perceived why the Unionist Party usually benefited from this phenomena, it was because, he argued, 'the Party will be the guardian of those national institutions in which are embodied his own prejudices and sentiment.'[33]

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[24] Richard Rose, *Governing Without Consensus: An Irish Perspective* (London: Faber & Faber, 1971), p. 258

[25] A concept first outlined by E. E. Schattsneider in *The Semi-Sovereign People* (New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), p. 71

[26] Colley, 'Apotheosis of George III', p. 122

[27] Cunningham, 'Language of Patriotism', pp. 25-7

[28] G. K. Chesterton, 'Secret People', published in the *Neolith* in 1907, cited in Patrick Wright, 'Last orders', *Guardian* (Review), 9 April 2005

[29] Geoffrey Best, a review of E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, *Historical Journal*, VII, 2 (1965), p. 278; Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes* (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 121

[30] Ervine, *Carson and the Ulster Movement*, p. 72

[31] Neville Kirk, *The Growth of Working Class Reformism in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985), p. 137; R. Samuel, 'The Deference Voter', *New Left Review* (January, 1960), pp. 9-13.

[32] Joyce, *Work, Society, and Politics*, p. 87

[33] The Lord Willoughby de Broke, 'The Unionist Position', *National Review*, LXII (368), October, 1913

The Home Rule issue was one which embodied more prejudice and sentiment than most - because it was the last time that religion and politics *seriously* intersected in British politics. Furthermore, Home Rule provided an issue which cut across the sectarian divisions *within* British Protestantism, as had happened in Britain with the Papal Aggression episode in 1851, and in Ulster itself with the reaction against Home Rule.[34] For British anti-Catholicism, hitherto dormant, was roused between 1912 and 1914 – and supported in some cases by the established Church itself. 'The hierarchy and clergy of the Church of England, as I can observe in Hampshire', recorded one correspondent to the *Times* in 1913 'are at the present hour very active in support of the most anti-Irish section of the Conservative Party.'[35]But it had been ever thus. When the Archbishop of York spoke at the 1898 Church Congress he noted with satisfaction the 'deep seated antipathy to Romanism which was happily characteristic of the great majority' but he then denounced 'the ignorant demagogues' who would exploit this.[36] The Edwardian politicians we have encountered may not have been ignorant but they did display decidedly demagogical tendencies.

Although there is some force behind the argument that in actual fact Carson 'strongly held back anti-Catholicism from its habitual riot, when he led the Ulster crusade.'[37] We only have to go to the Edwardian Catholic press to discover whether they believed anti-Catholicism was being restrained, and an editorial from the *Catholic Times* at the time of the Curragh mutiny would suggest not. This esteemed organ maintained that '[t]he whole Unionist case against Home Rule consists of prejudices against the Catholic Church.'[38] Indeed, it was in fact the Leader of these Unionists who was the most irresponsible in this matter. Bonar Law's most recent biographer contends that the Unionist leader was 'quite prepared to play the Orange Card of Ulster to stop Home Rule, but he would never beat the Orange drum of anti-Catholic hatred'[39] Yet, as history has demonstrated, there is a very fine line between these two positions.

That the British Unionist Party changed their attitude from preventing Irish Home Rule *per se* to merely preserving Ulster's autonomy[40] did not matter (although some remained die hard on this question, including a correspondent to the *Times* who wrote that 'what appeals most to British Protestant Unionists and non-Union protestants is the helpless position of their brethren outside Ulster').[41] Andrew Bonar Law exploited the prominence of Home Rule by playing the Orange Card to get elected. Even the ultra-loyal UWUC

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[34] Sandeen, *Roots of Fundamentalism*, pp. 17, 21, 39-41; Alan Megahey, ''God will defend the right': The Protestant Churches and opposition to Home Rule', D. George Boyce, and Alan O'Day, eds, *Defenders of the Union: a survey of British and Irish Unionism, since 1801* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 171

[35] Letter from C. J. O'Donnell to the *Times*, 15 December 1913

[36] McLeod, 'Protestantism', p. 64

[37] Owen Dudley Edwards, 'Carson as advocate: Marjoribanks and Wilde', Sabine Wichert, ed., *From the United Irishmen to Twentieth Century Unionism, A Festschrift for A. T. Q. Stewart* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2004), p. 132

[38] *Catholic Times and Catholic Opinion*, 17 April 1914

[39] Adams, *Bonar Law*, p. 101

[40] Alvin Jackson, *Ireland, 1798-1998* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 239-40

[41] Letter from Nicholas Gosselin to the *Times*, 5 November 1913.

suspected that it was 'allowing itself to be made the tool of the English Conservative Party ... who have no regard for Ulster except as a lever for securing their own return to power.'[42] In fact it is arguable that the Unionist leaders deliberately kept the issue at fever pitch to make the most of public opposition - as Carson himself admitted to the Tory MP W.A.S. Hewins in July 1913 that 'he had known for a long time that the government would not force Home Rule on Ulster. So it is all play acting.'[43] This was an act conducted with remarkable chutzpah. Even F. E. Smith (a private atheist) was cynical enough to ask an assembly of Orangemen: 'if we are not prepared to die for our faith, in the name of God and of men what is there we would die for?'[44]

Yet the Unionists must have known that such shameless exploitation required delicate handling. Lord Willoughby de Broke may have argued that 'the mass of voters would only understand methods of a more sledgehammer type'[45], but one only has to read Law and Carson's pronouncements to understand that, for them, some measure of subtlety and inference was important. In more than one speech they would exclaim their admiration for their 'Roman-Catholic fellow-countrymen', before provocatively exhuming the ghosts of Derry and the Boyne. Contemporary commentators noticed that when these two men spoke they addressed two audiences, firstly the Westminster set and the national press who were alive to political nuance, and would report as such; and secondly their supporters in the auditorium, in Britain, and in Ulster for whom the speakers would deploy their rabble-rousing rhetoric. We have tended to concentrate on the former, but, as the *Manchester Guardian* observed, 'Sir Edward habitually speaks in two voices ... one for the inspiration of his followers in Ulster [but not just Ulster] and the other for the peace of mind of his allies in England.' Thus at a speech in Manchester Carson stated, for the benefit of the press, that he was 'hoping, longing, and praying for peace', but to whip up the audience, and to send his supporters across Britain a message, he announced that he was determined to go to the 'very end [and] the day he would *like best* would be when he had to tell the UVF to mobilise.'[46] George Dangerfield observed this tendency when he wrote that

> Sir Edward himself never descended to sectarian arguments, but how thrilling his reference to a "nefarious conspiracy" and the like must have been to Protestant ears: and how strange, how small, his sense of responsibility when he allowed himself to utter it.'[47]

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[42] Memorandum from the Ulster Women's Unionist Council to Sir Edward Carson, 10 June 1914. PRONI, D/1507/A/6/6

[43] Diary entry, 9 July 1913, see W. A. S. Hewins, *The Apologia of an Imperialist, Forty years of Empire policy* (London: Constable, 1929, p.302

[44] R. F. G. Holmes, 'Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right': The Protestant Churches and Ulster's Resistance to Home Rule, 1912-14', *The Church and War* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p. 328

[45] Series 5, House of Lords, Vol. 15, col. 43, 10 February 1914

[46] *Manchester Guardian*, 22 June 1913

[47] George Dangerfield, *The Damnable Question: A Study in Anglo-Irish Relations* (Boston: Little Brown, 1976), p. 72

This was 'dog-whistle politics' before the term was invented.[48]

It has been pointed out that 'popular unionist militancy was a kind of Frankenstein's monster', and that once roused would be difficult to tame.[49] But that applies in Liverpool as well as Lisburn, and Plymouth as well as Portrush. Historians of the Ulster Crisis have largely ignored this point. But such passionate support for Ulster was not merely the creation of the Unionists. British opposition to Home Rule was widely and honestly held, and cannot be gainsaid. Leo Amery wrote in 1914 that the anti-Home Rule campaign would 'amount to very little unless there was behind it something more than political demonstrations'.[50]But even without arming themselves, Unionist rallies give us a wonderful insight into the seriousness and solemnity of support for the Ulstermen. *The Covenanter*, propaganda sheet for the BLSUU, got to the heart of this when claimed that 'not the least striking and significant features of these demonstrations, has been their self-restraint ... the real feeling of a huge gathering is not to be measured by its uproar but by its attentive silence.'[51]

An oft-commented comparison between the success of the Corn Law-repealers and the failure of the Chartists lay in the support of the middle classes for the former and their relative absence from the ranks of the latter. It is almost impossible to discover the class profile of the thousands of Unionist demonstrators, volunteers, and covenanters but it is surely significant that the pro-Ulster campaign could easily contain aristocratic Household Cavalry Colonels, Liverpool Dockers, and middle-class journalists from Darlington - as well as every class gradation between. Therefore it is enlightening that Lord Milner would remark privately that 'when before, in our lifetime, have thousands upon thousands of sober steady-going citizens deliberately contemplated resistance to an Act of Parliament, because they sincerely believed it was devoid of all moral sanction?'[52] Milner probably realised that the essential steadiness and commitment of the middle classes, was not something that could be provoked with impunity.

But why are the Chartists remembered but the Covenanters cast into oblivion? Maybe, as one historian of Ulster paramilitaries has pointed out, it is because so few academics are Unionists, and that 'the educated middle classes have difficulty understanding why anyone would fight for something as inconsequential as patriotism'.[53] Perhaps, though, the most plausible analysis is that in our haste to count down to the 'guns of August', or our desire to see the Edwardians as the parents of our modern world we have failed to see the centrality of the old impulses in the matrix of pre-Great War British Society.

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[48] A term first coined in Australian politics to describe the campaigning style of John Howard's Liberal Party in which it was alleged that they exploited a fear of Asian immigrants, see for example Peter Manning, *Dog Whistle Politics and Journalism* (Sydney: AICJ, 2004), for an exploration of its supposed use in the British general election of 2005 by the Conservatives see the *Guardian*, 22 March 2005

[49] Alvin Jackson, 'Irish Unionism, 1870-1922', p. 129

[50] Amery, *Political Life*, p. 440

[51] *The Covenanter*, 24 June 1914

[52] Letter from Viscount Milner to the Earl of Selborne, 18 January 1914, BLO, MSS. Eng. Hist. c. 689 (17)

[53] Steve Bruce, *The Red Hand: Protestant Paramilitaries in Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 1

What is striking about the later Edwardian period is how the Irish question seemed to transcend traditional Party divisions – as it had done in 1886. Consider the case of the Unionist agent in Exeter who informed a colleague in June 1914 that '[a]ll the Liberals ... assure me that if the next general election could be fought on the single issue, namely Home Rule, we should have their unanimous support.'[54] Indeed, a sort of anti-politics message is detectable with even Unionists declaring that the attempt to solve the Ulster question 'by ordinary Party methods' was like 'trying to cure a cancer with Elliman's Embrocation.'[55] It is surely pertinent that the consequent appeal 'Be neither Conservatives nor Liberals, be ENGLISHMEN' found its mark in the million and a quarter volunteers for military service between 1914 and 1916.[56]

Those who have perceived a proto-Fascist element in Edwardian Unionism would have found much corroboration in the musings of Leo Amery. He wrote of Carson that 'the secret of his power has lain precisely in the fact that he has represented, not abstract argument, but concrete will, the will of a great community embodied and intensified in the single will of its leader.'[57] What is more, the vivid description of BLSUU rallies that appeared in the *Covenanter* provides further substantiation that the trappings and atmosphere at least were similar:

> The coldest imagination must have been fired by such gatherings as those at Eastbourne and Leeds, of Newcastle and Mountain Ash and Glasgow, by the long processions, the waving of countless flags, the thunder of the old covenanting hymn, the vast array of faces fixed on the orators, [and] the stern enthusiasm of the packed assemblies.[58]

It is useful to ponder that 'a phenomenon of such extended malignance as the Great War does not come out of a golden age.'[59] And if the creation of Northern Ireland was Bonar Law's enduring legacy then it was also the responsibility of that part of the British population who gave him a mandate to campaign for separation. For it was in a large part through the actions of those who demonstrated so determinedly against severance from Ireland (or at least the Protestant parts of Ireland) that led to 'Loyal Ulster' being omitted from the jurisdiction of the Irish Free State in 1921. When a Drumcree Orangeman in 1996 was scoffed at for presuming that 'England will rise in our defence if we are not let down the [Garvaghy] road',[60] he may have recalled an Ulster folk memory of hundreds of thousands of Edwardian Englishmen – and Scotsmen and Welshmen – who did assemble

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[54] Letter from B. M. Thornton to H. E. Duke, 22 June 1914. BLO, MS Selborne 78 (86)
[55] BLO, MS Milner Dep. Add Mss Eng. Hist. C.689, p. 67
[56] Anne Summers, 'The character of Edwardian nationalism: three popular leagues', Paul Kennedy and Anthony Nicholls, eds, *Nationalist and Racialist Movements in Britain and Germany before 1914* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1981), p. 70, 84
[57] Leo Amery writing in the *Quarterly Review*, July 1914
[58] *The Covenanter*, 24 June 1914
[59] Barbara Tuchmann, *The Proud Tower* (1966; Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1980), p. xiv
[60] Ruth Dudley Edwards, *The Faithful Tribe: An Intimate Portrait of the Loyal Institutions* (London: Harper Collins, 2000), p. 506

angrily in support of Protestant Ulster. A time when English papers could declare that 'Ulster will not have Home Rule: England will not allow it to be forced on her.'[61]

The factors that once located Orangeism at the centre of a discourse of Britishness have now all but disappeared, or are at least in serious decline. Writing about relations between Northern Ireland and England in June 2006, Max Hastings noted that 'now that we English have become a largely irreligious people, we forget how powerful was the Protestant bond.'[62] But in 1914 they were all still in rude health.[63] For in their scale, message, and impact, the various manifestations of support for the Union provide the link between the emergence of jingoism in the 1870s, the non-violent 'mafficking' of huge crowds in 1900,[64] and the extraordinary rush to the colours in 1914 - the latter being tellingly described as 'obsolete patriotism.'[65] But this kind of traditional, imperial, British patriotism was not so obsolete, and it found new expression in support for Protestant Ulster.

It is time to disinter the Covenanters from the rubble that fell on top of British society in 1914. Historians have for too long hurried past the Irish – or more precisely the Ulster – question, distracted by Serbian assassins or ideological imperatives. But British popular culture on the brink of war had different pre-occupations: for it is surely revealing that on 2 August 1914 Madame Tussaud's announced, in an advertisement in the *Times*, that their 'new attractions and up to date additions' included waxworks of 'the chief actors in the European crisis' - as well as the Tybalt and Benvolio of the Edwardian political stage: 'Mr John Redmond and Sir Edward Carson'.[66]

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[61] *Liverpool Courier*, 9 June, 1913.
[62] *Daily Mail*, 10 June 2006
[63] Christine Kinealy, 'The Orange Order and representations of Britishness', Stephen Caunce, Ewa Mazierska, Susan Sydney-Smith, John K. Walton, eds, *Relocating Britishness* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 232
[64] Richard Price, *An Imperial War and the British Working Class: Working Class attitudes and reactions to the Boer War, 1899-1902* (London: Routledge, 1972), pp. 132-77
[65] Hugh Cunningham, 'Jingoism, 1877-78', *Victorian Studies*, June (1971), pp. 429-453; Richard Price, *An Imperial War and the British Working Class: Working Class attitudes and reactions to the Boer War, 1899-1902* (London: Routledge, 1972); W. J. Reader, *At duty's call: a study in obsolete patriotism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).
[66] *Times*, 2 August 1914

APPENDIX

Eastbourne Gazette, 10 June 1914
Eastbourne anti-Home Rule demonstration, Order of Procession

Mr Fritt (veteran soldier) carrying Union Jack
Band under the direction of Mr W Burrell with Dr M V McKechnie as marker.
Banner: "South Sussex Division supports Irish Loyalists."
Mr and Mrs Rupert Gwynne.
Lady Dent and Mr A D O Wedderburn, KC.
Mrs Campbell and Sir John Maitland.
Colonel Mervyn Archdale and Miss Gwynne.
Mr J. J. Page, Major Sparshott, R. M. L. I., and Mr William S. Keyte.
His Grace the Duke of Devonshire and Lord Charles Beresford in open carriage drawn by full gun's crew of Naval pensioners and escorted by other Naval men.
Meads contingent with banner. Chief Marshal, Mr J. Trevelyan Adams.
Contingents from every polling district outside Eastbourne, with Newhaven Band.
Chief Marshals, Mr J. A. Gray (Newhaven), Colonel R. de Bray Hassell (Waldron).
Marker for Band, Mr Frank T. Lloyd.
Heathfield Junior Unionist Association , led by the secretary (Mr G. Teagel).
Banner carried in Hyde Park: "Eastbourne supports Loyal Ulster,

Hyde Park, 4th April 1914. After the banner walked the council and leading officials of the Eastbourne habitation of the Primrose League.
Banner of the Eastbourne habitation of the Primrose League.
Devonshire Ward contingent with banner.
Chief Marshal, Major E. C. Harris.
Postmen's band with marker (Mr Brenton Cann).
Central Ward contingent with banner.
St Mary's Ward contingent headed by a band. Chief Marshal Mr Arthur Ticehurst; marker for band, Mr W Ashdown.
Old Town Conservative Slate Club.
Cavendish Ward Contingent with banner and Hailsham Band. Chief Marshal, Mr Aden Beresford; marker, Mr G. A. Snudden.
Members of Eastbourne Constitutional Club.
Upperton ward Contingent, headed by Lewes Band. Chief Marshal , Mr M. H. Beattie; marker for band, Mr H. C. Harris.
Redoubt Ward Contingent, headed by band and banner. Chief Marshal, Major S. F. Cooke; marker for band, Mr A. P. Ballard.

Eastbourne Chronicle 13 June 1914
Names, addresses, and years of service of the veterans that escorted Lord Charles Beresford

A. Little, 27, Rylestone Road 40
E. J. Fillery, 38, Seaford Road 40
W. Edwards at Westcliff mansions 29
A. Fielder, Sidley Road 27
G. Wickerson, 19A, Avondale Road 26
W. Hart, 2, Russell's Cottages, Old Town 22
S. Laurence, 5, Nevill Road 21
T. R. Morris, 174, Latimer Road 24
G. White, Latimer Road 20
W. G. B. Weedon, Longstone Road 14
W. J. Gilham, 5, Springfield Road 14
A. French, Southdown House 22
J. A. Bacon, 12, Kilda Street 14
A. R. Scarlet, 150, Whitley Road 26
G. Relf, 54, Winter Road 12
D. Turner, 59 Melbourne Road 12
Aggregate 363

D/972/19 (Smythe Papers)
The Ulster Unionist Council and Ulster Union of Constitutional Associations Year Book ... 1915 (Belfast 1915)
During the past year the plan of inviting deputations consisting largely of fair minded and unbiased Radical and Labour Home Rulers from the Constituencies's of GB to visit Ireland to study the question for themselves was extended. No less than 116 C's were represented on the deputations. They included the following:

Aberdeenshire E., Argyllshire, Ashton under Lyne, Ayr, Barnstaple, Barrow, Banbury, Bedfordshire S., Berwickshire, Blackfriars, Bradford, Brigg, Bromwich W., Buckinghamshire SW., Carlisle, Camborne, Camlachie, Campbelltown, Cheltenham, Chippenham, Cirencester, Clackmannan, College, Cornwall, NW and SE, Croydon, Darlington, Derby, Devon Mid, Dudley, Dumbartonshire, Dumfriesshire, Edinburgh S., Exeter, Fifeshire E., Forfarshire, Gainsborough, Glasgow, Gloucestershire, Gorton, Govan, Grantham, Haddingtonshire, Hartlepool W., Herefordshire S., Hexham, Huddersfield, Hull, Hutchestown, Hyde, Inverness, Irvine, Jarrow, Kendal, Kidderminster, Kilmarnock, King's Lynn, Kirkcudbrightshire, Lancaster, Lanarkshire NE, S, NW, Mid, Leicestershire, Leigh, Lincoln, Linlithgow, Liskeard, Lonsdale N., Lothian E., Loughborough, Maidstone, Manchester (all four divisions), Melton, Middleton, Newton, Norfolk Mid, S, SW, Nottinghamshire, Oxon mid, Partick, Peebles and Selkirk, Perthshire E W, Plymouth, Preston, Reading, Renfrew E W, Rochdale, Roxburghshire, Rugby, Saffron Walden, Salford N S W, Skipton, Somerset N , Staffordshire W., Stalybridge, Stevenston, Stirling, St Helens, St Rollox, Suffolk, Torquay, Truro, Tynemouth, Warrington, Wigan, Wiltshire W, Wisbech, Wolverhampton E S, Worcestershire Mid.

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Durham Record Office
Lady Londonderry Papers
Long Papers

House of Lords Record Office
Bonar Law Papers
Willoughby de Broke Papers

Liverpool Record Office
Derby Papers

National Archives of Scotland
Steel Maitland Papers

Northumberland Ducal Archive
Papers of 8th Duke

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
Carson Papers
Crawford Papers
Lady Craigavon Papers
Lord Craigavon Papers
Londonderry Papers
UUC files (D.1327)
UAI (D.989)

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Bath Chronicle
Belfast Evening Telegraph
Belfast Newsletter
Belfast Weekly News
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Birkenhead and Cheshire Advertiser
Birkenhead News
Birmingham Daily Mail
Birmingham Daily Post
Birmingham Gazette
Blackburn Weekly Telegraph
Blyth News
Bolton Evening News
Bolton Journal and Guardian
Bristol Evening Times
Bristol Times and Mirror
Burnley Express and Advertiser
Carlisle Journal
Catholic Herald
Cheshire Observer
Chester Chronicle
Chester Courant
Coatbridge Express
Coatbridge Leader
Covenanter
Coventry Graphic
Coventry Times and Warwickshire Journal
Croydon Guardian
Daily Chronicle
Daily Express
Daily Graphic
Daily Herald
Daily Mail
Daily News
Daily Sketch
Daily Telegraph
Darwen Advertiser
Dublin Express
Dundee Advertiser
Dundee People's Journal
Durham County Advertiser
East Anglian Daily Times
Eastbourne Chronicle
Eastbourne Gazette
Eastern Daily Press
Eastern Daily Times
Eastern Evening News
Eastern Morning News
Edinburgh Evening News
Fife Herald and Journal
Glamorgan County Times
Glamorgan Free Press
Glasgow Daily Record
Glasgow Evening Citizen
Glasgow Evening Times
Glasgow Herald
Glasgow News
Glasgow Observer and - Catholic Herald
Globe
Gloucestershire Echo
Grantham Journal
Grimsby Telegraph
Heywood Advertiser
Hull Daily Mail
Hull Daily News
Huntingdonshire Post
Inverness Courier
Irish Times
Jarrow Express and Tyneside Advertiser
Jarrow Guardian
Kent and Sussex Courier
Lancashire Daily Post
Leeds Mercury
Lincoln and Stamford Mercury
Lincolnshire Echo
Liverpool Catholic Times and Catholic Opinion
Liverpool Courier
Liverpool Daily Post and Mercury
Liverpool Evening Express
Liverpool Forward

Liverpool Mercury
London Evening Standard
Manchester Courier
Manchester Guardian
Midland Daily Telegraph
Morning Post
Newcastle Daily Chronicle
Newcastle Daily Journal
Newcastle Evening Chronicle
Newcastle Evening Mail
Newcastle Illustrated Chronicle
Norfolk Chronicle
Northampton Herald
Northampton Mercury
North Devon Herald
Northern Daily Telegraph
Northern Echo
North Star
Norwood News
Norwood Review and Crystal Palace Reporter
Nottingham Daily Express
Nottingham Evening Post
Nottingham Guardian
Observer
Oldham Standard
Oxford Times
Pall Mall Gazette
Perthshire Advertiser
Perthshire Constitutional and Journal
Punch
Reading Chronicle
Reading Standard
Rochdale Observer
Royal Cornwall Gazette
Salisbury and Winchester Journal
Scotsman
Sheffield Daily Independent
Sheffield Daily Telegraph
Shepton Mallet Journal
Shields Daily News
Shields Gazette
South London Press
Spectator
Standard
St Helens Newspaper and Advertiser
St Helens Reporter
St Helens Standard
Suffolk Chronicle and Mercury
Sunderland Echo
The Times
Torquay Times
Totnes Times
Wallsend Herald and Advertiser
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INDEX

INDEX

INDEX

INDEX

INDEX

INDEX